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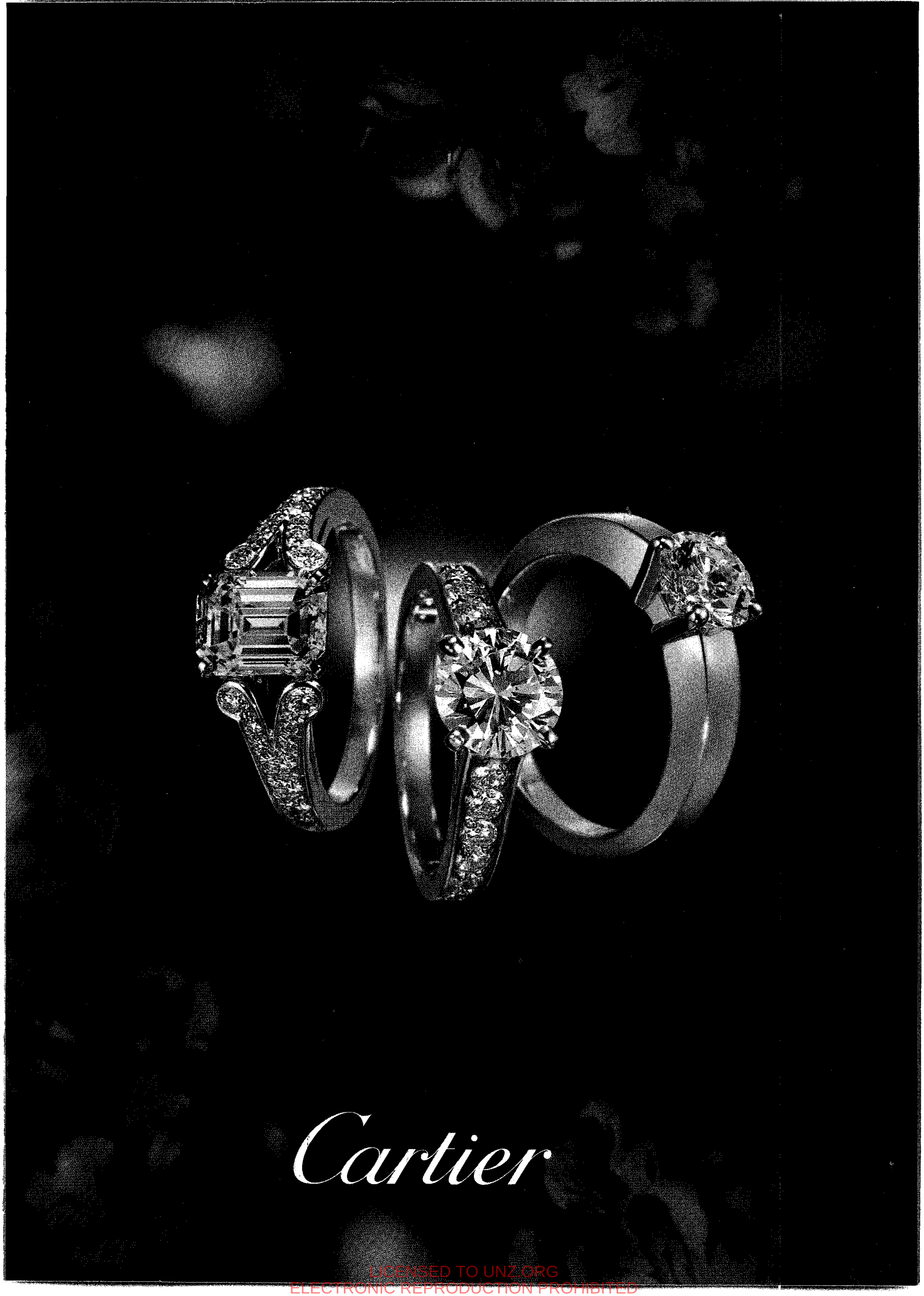
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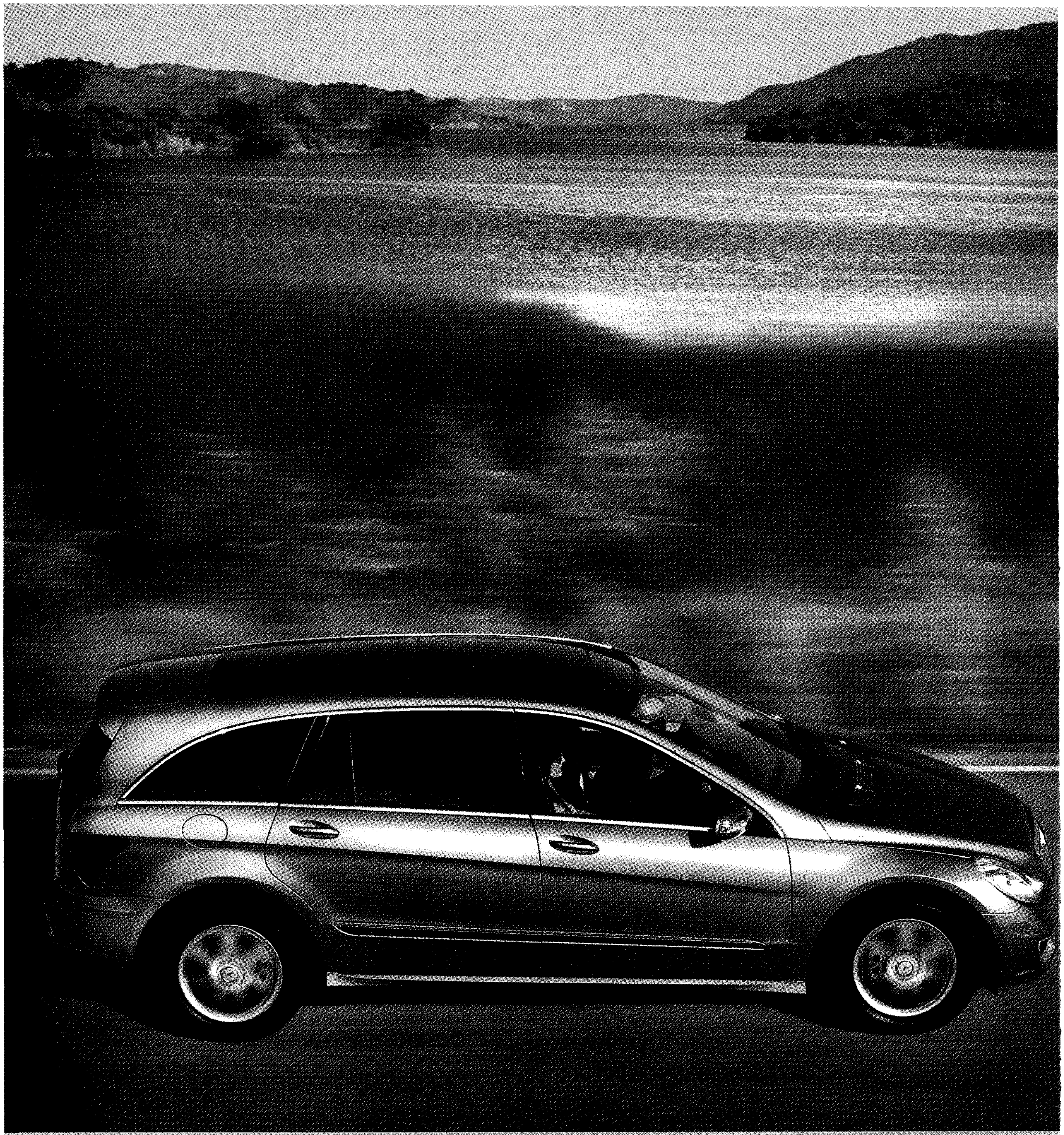

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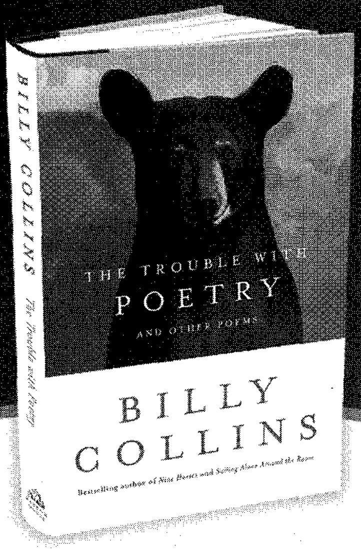
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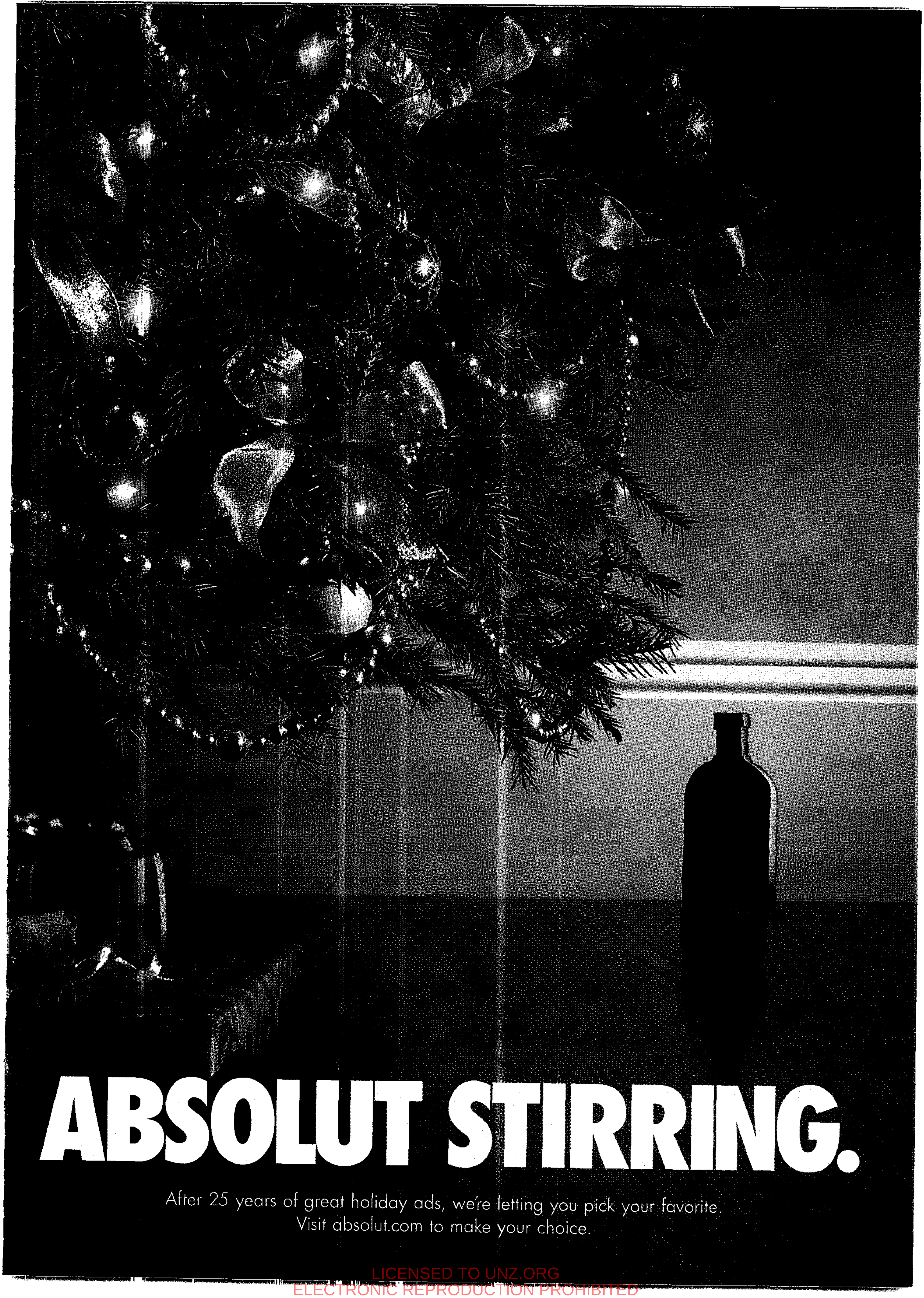
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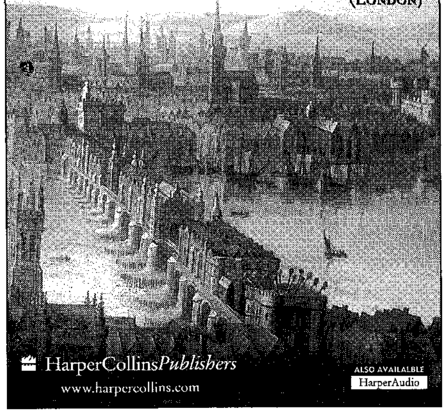


CONTRIBUTORS

Jane Kramer (Comment, p. 41) writes the Letter from Europe. Her piece about young Muslims in France, "Taking the Veil," was published in November, 2004.

Joan Acocella (The Talk of the Town, p. 43) is the magazine's dance critic.

Steve Coll ("Fault Lines," p. 48), a staff writer, won this year's Pulitzer Prize in nonfiction, for "Ghost Wars," his book about the C.I.A. and Afghanistan.

Charles Simic (Poem, p. 52) is a poet, essayist, and translator. His most recent book of poems, "My Noiseless Entourage," came out in April.

Woody Allen (Casual, p. 54) has been a contributor to the magazine for many years.

Ben McGrath (The Talk of the Town, p. 42) is a staff writer.

Roger Angell ("The Late Show," p. 56) is the author of seven books on baseball, including "Game Time." His new book of memoirs, "Let Me Finish," will be published in May.

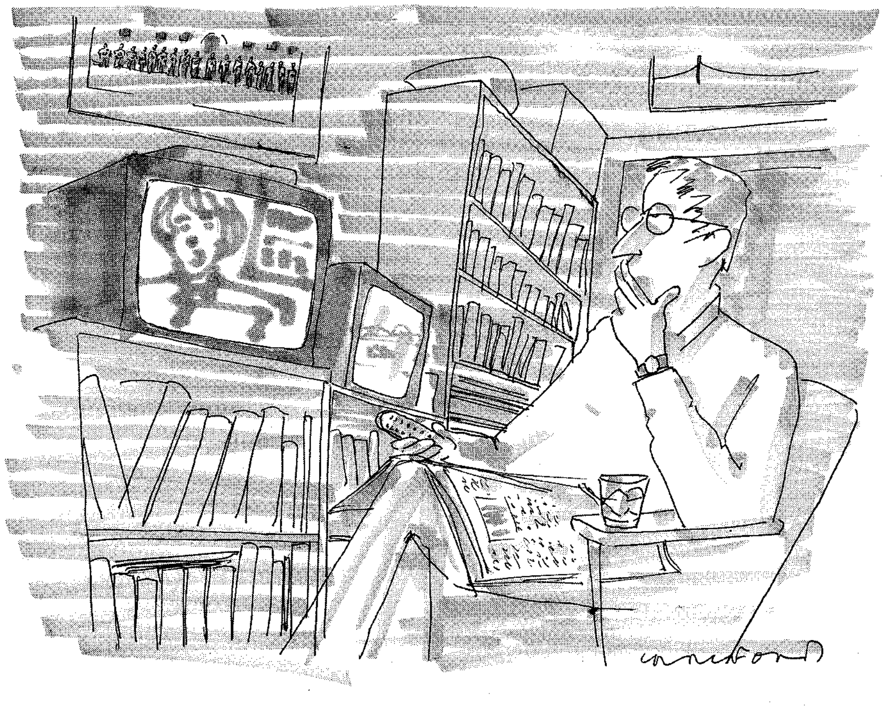
Laura Secor ("Fugitives," p. 62) is a staff editor of the Op-Ed page at the *Times*.

Cynthia Zarin ("Green Dreams," p. 76) has been writing for the magazine since 1983.

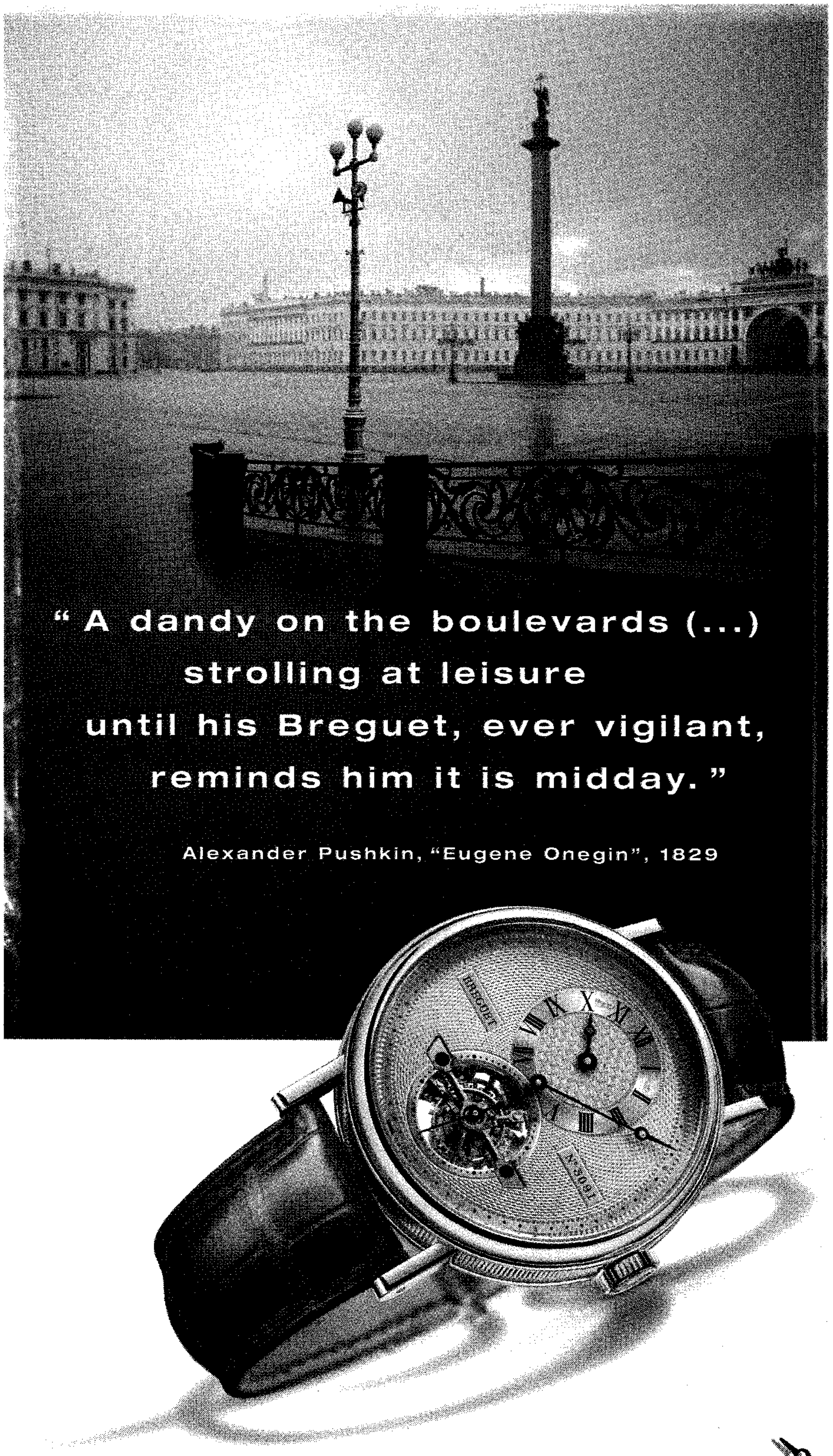
Haruki Murakami (Fiction, p. 84) has published more than ten novels, including "Kafka on the Shore."

Adam Gopnik (A Critic at Large, p. 88) has just published "The King in the Window," a children's book.

Peter de Sève (Cover) designed the characters for the film "Ice Age 2," which is coming out in March. ♦



"Fox News has actually learned squat. Details at ten."


“ A dandy on the boulevards (...)
strolling at leisure
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reminds him it is midday. ”
Alexander Pushkin, “Eugene Onegin”, 1829

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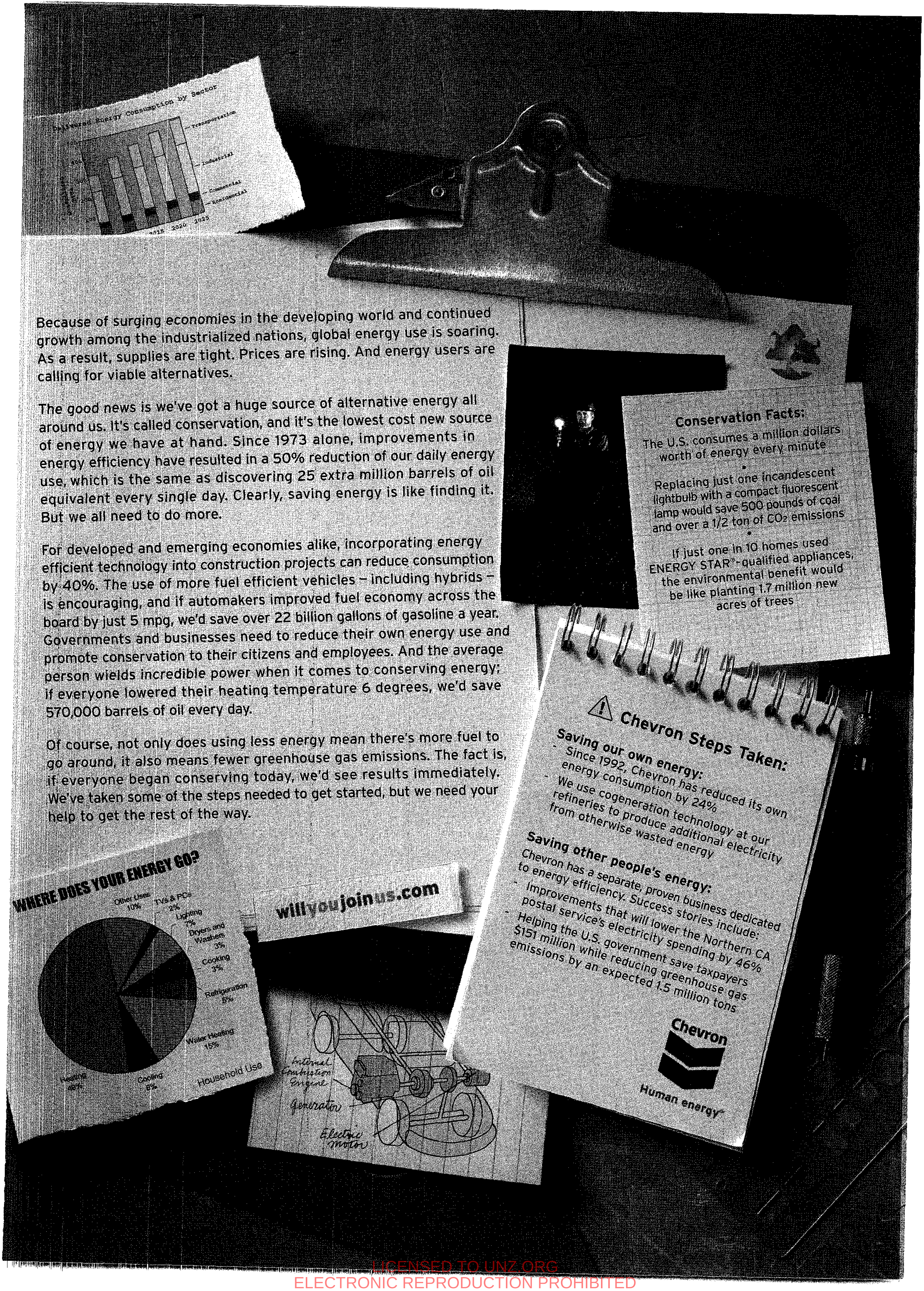
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Because of surging economies in the developing world and continued growth among the industrialized nations, global energy use is soaring. As a result, supplies are tight. Prices are rising. And energy users are calling for viable alternatives.

The good news is we've got a huge source of alternative energy all around us. It's called conservation, and it's the lowest cost new source of energy we have at hand. Since 1973 alone, improvements in energy efficiency have resulted in a 50% reduction of our daily energy use, which is the same as discovering 25 extra million barrels of oil equivalent every single day. Clearly, saving energy is like finding it. But we all need to do more.

For developed and emerging economies alike, incorporating energy efficient technology into construction projects can reduce consumption by 40%. The use of more fuel efficient vehicles – including hybrids – is encouraging, and if automakers improved fuel economy across the board by just 5 mpg, we'd save over 22 billion gallons of gasoline a year. Governments and businesses need to reduce their own energy use and promote conservation to their citizens and employees. And the average person wields incredible power when it comes to conserving energy; if everyone lowered their heating temperature 6 degrees, we'd save 570,000 barrels of oil every day.

Of course, not only does using less energy mean there's more fuel to go around, it also means fewer greenhouse gas emissions. The fact is, if everyone began conserving today, we'd see results immediately. We've taken some of the steps needed to get started, but we need your help to get the rest of the way.

Conservation Facts:

The U.S. consumes a million dollars worth of energy every minute

•

Replacing just one incandescent lightbulb with a compact fluorescent lamp would save 500 pounds of coal and over a 1/2 ton of CO_2 emissions

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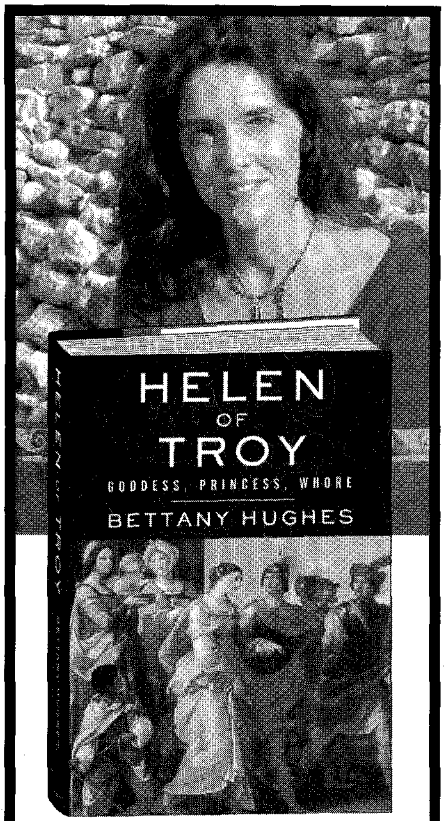

The British historian Bettany Hughes seeks out the flesh-and-blood woman
—Bronze Age Greek aristocrat—
behind the legendary
HELEN OF TROY
Goddess, Princess, Whore

◆

"Hughes' speculations are spectacular. Hers is a Helen of, and for, a material age: a clever princess ...a mistress of treasures."
—*The Independent,* U.K.

"She splendidly reclaims Helen from centuries of victimhood ...Puts her at the center of a world in which the primordial power was female"
—*The Observer,* U.K.

"Her portrait is as close to a real Helen as we are likely to get."
—*Financial Times*

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COVERT ART

Louis Menand states that the Cold War's main forum for United States cultural propaganda was in Western Europe and targeted its élites (A Critic at Large, October 17th). That was true in the early postwar period, but the program soon expanded to Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In November, 1957, George Minden, a director of Radio Free Europe's Romanian service, induced New York City's Whitney Museum of American Art to mail three hundred copies of Alexander Eliot's book "Three Hundred Years of American Painting" to museums, university art departments, and artists in Eastern Europe. The enthusiastic response prompted Minden to follow up with books by Sartre, Camus, and other modern writers. I worked for a program that expanded the idea to the Soviet Union. Since most books couldn't be mailed, they were distributed to visiting Soviet delegations, students, tourists, and diplomats. We also translated into Russian works by such authors as George Orwell, James Joyce, and Robert Conquest, and published books by Russian authors who were proscribed in the Soviet Union, like Nabokov and Pasternak. Soviet citizens came up with ingenious ways to get the books into their country. Members of the Moscow Philharmonic slipped book pages into their sheet music and a young woman who was flying from London to Moscow with her infant son squeezed a mini edition of "The Gulag Archipelago" into the child's diaper. And, yes, the programs were covertly funded by the C.I.A.

Ludmilla Thorne
Elizabeth, N.J.

EASING PAIN

Jerome Groopman accurately portrays the complexities of reflex sympathetic dystrophy ("When Pain Remains," October 10th). Still, over the past decade we have encountered some patients whose chronic pain has been successfully treated. Neuroscience findings support the idea that pain is not sensation in isolation but part of a dynamic system. Although invasive procedures such as nerve blocks and spinal-cord stimulation are valuable in controlling pain, sustained benefits require a multidisciplinary approach, including psychological treatment, physical therapy, and behavioral therapy. With this method, we have seen patients achieve significant and lasting disease remission, restoration of function, and decreased pain.

Marilyn S. Jacobs
Joshua P. Prager, M.D.
Center for Rehabilitation of Pain Syndromes
Los Angeles, Calif.

Having worked as an occupational therapist in a chronic-pain rehabilitation program for seventeen years, I was surprised that Groopman's article on R.S.D. primarily addressed pharmacological and surgical interventions to treat R.S.D. There are many well-researched noninvasive strategies that are essential in combination with those mentioned. Range-of-motion exercises help preserve the joint mobility and muscle integrity that are compromised when a person adapts a guarded posture because of pain, while the extreme sensitivity to touch experienced by many patients can be alleviated by desensitization, in which self-administered deep pressure, tolerated by many individuals with R.S.D., can gradually progress to a lighter touch. And, finally, a technique known as stress loading can reëducate the nervous system through the use of added weight to the extremity.

Sara Faust
Dayton, Ohio

•

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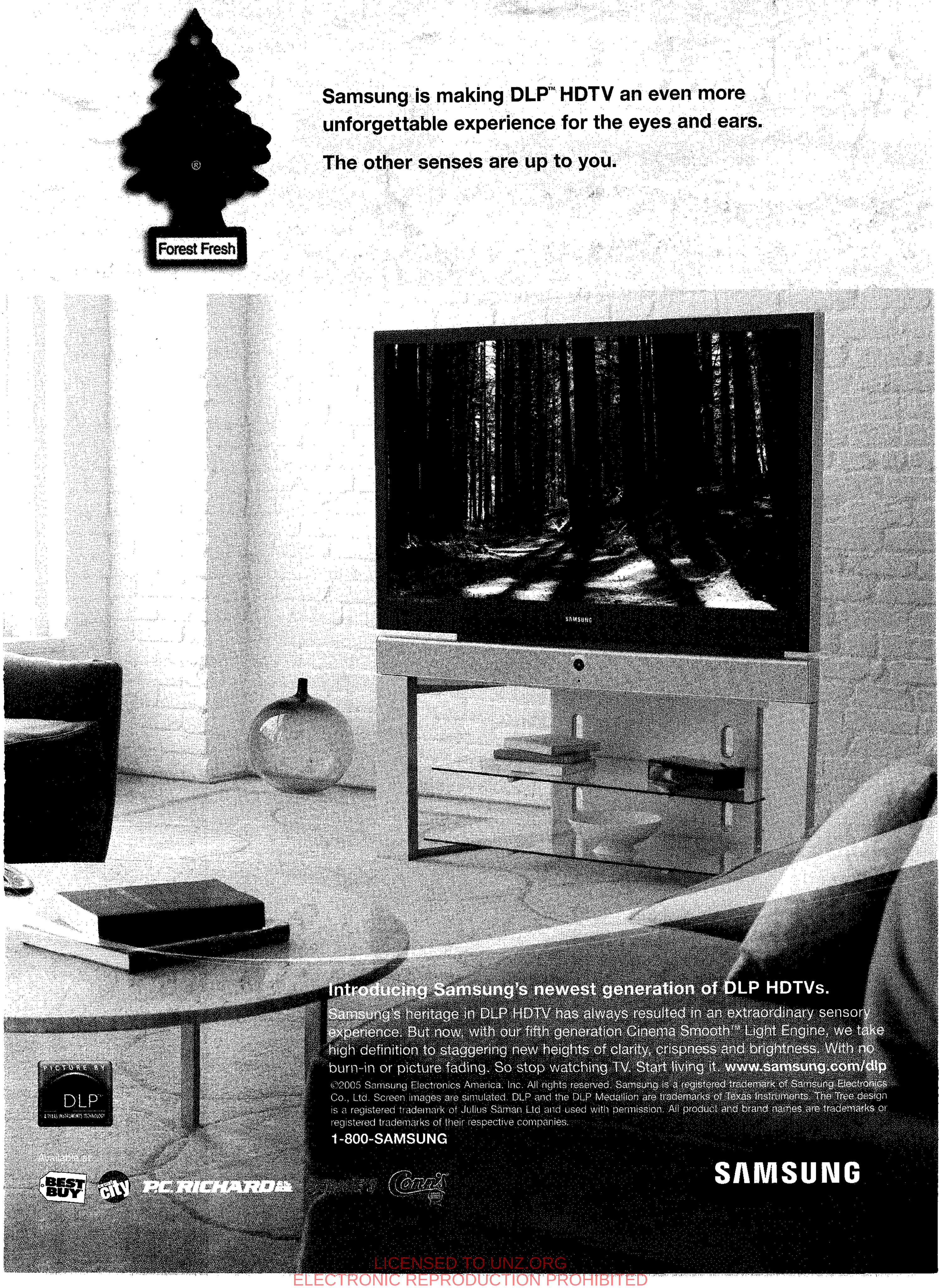
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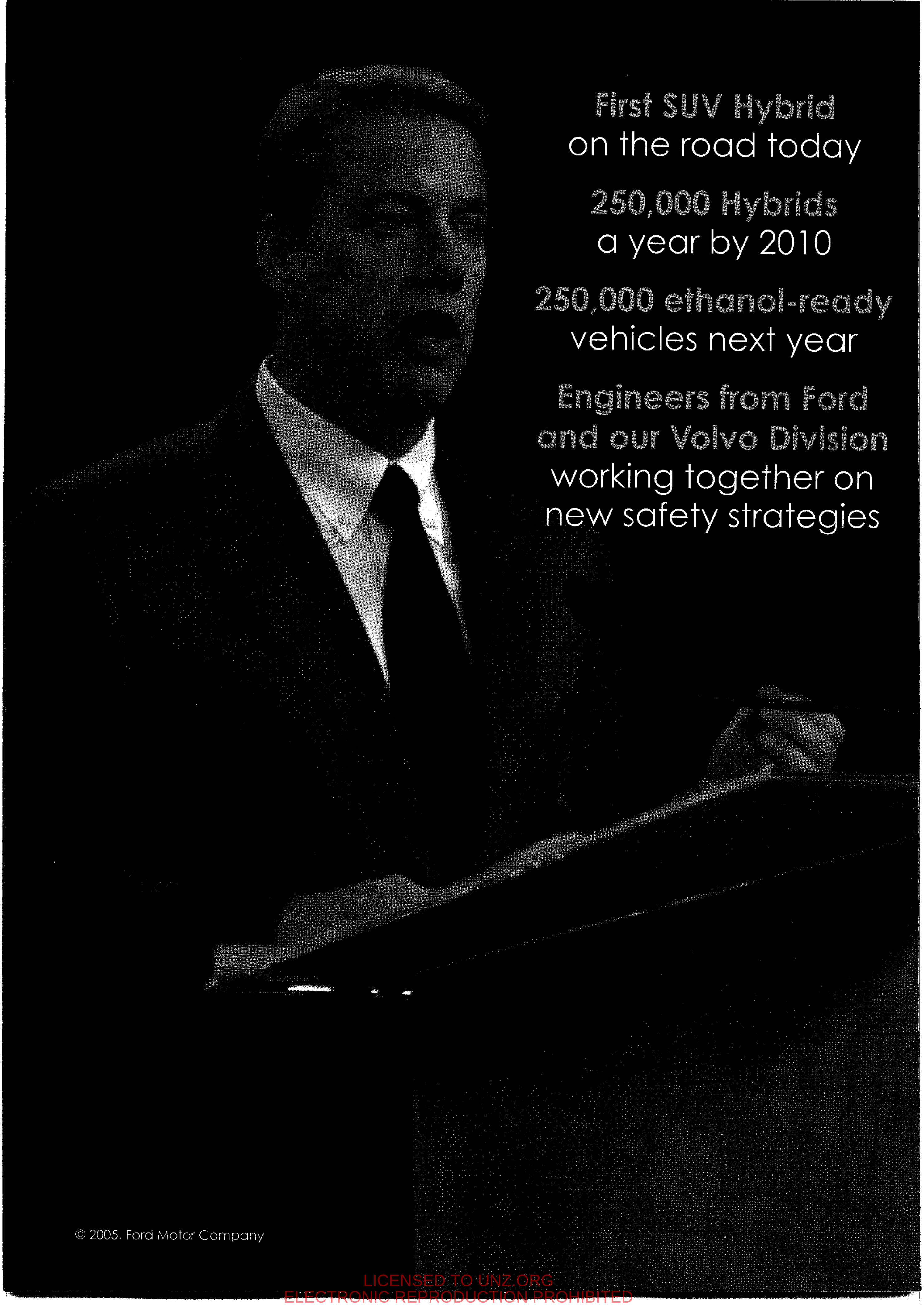
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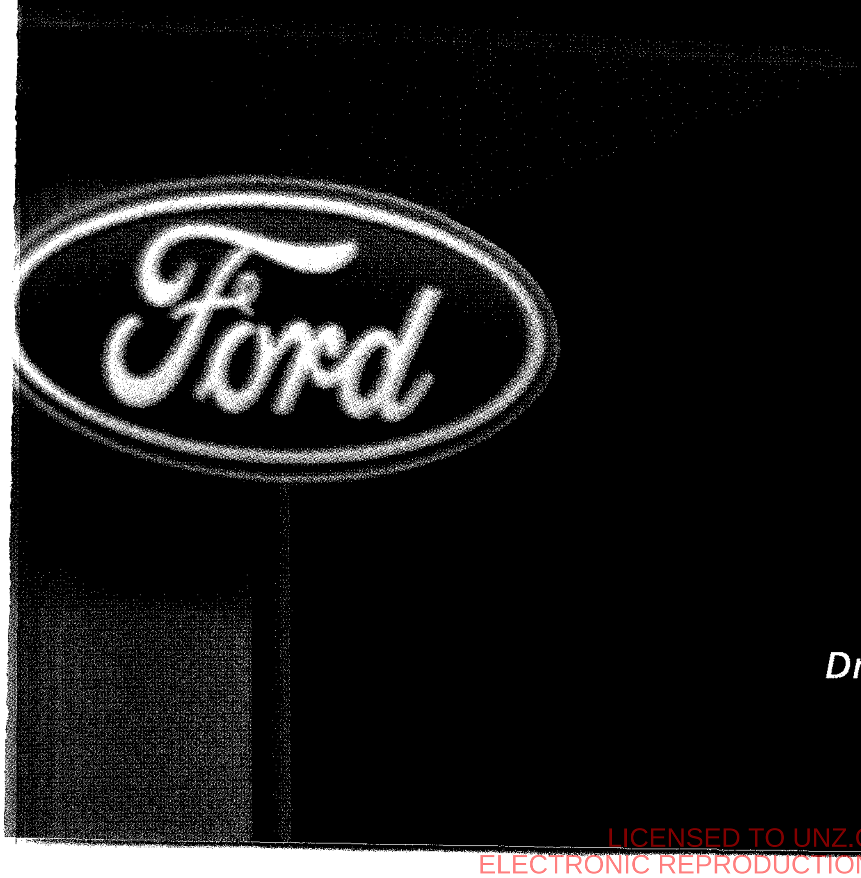

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Richard Tuttle's "Art Into Life," at the Whitney gala. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
20	21	22	16	17	18	19

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE

ROPED IN

Before "Rope" was an Alfred Hitchcock film, it was a play by Patrick Hamilton from 1929, which loosely fictionalized the Leopold and Loeb thrill killing. The Drama Dept. revives the play at the Zipper Theatre; David Warren directs. (See page 16.)

NIGHT LIFE

AFRICAN BEAT

The Congolese ensemble Konono N°1 combines indigenous rhythms and instrumentation (it was founded by the *likembé,* or thumb-piano, virtuoso Mawangu Mingiedi) with Western amplification to make a distorted dance music that's at once earthy and futuristic. The group has been around for more than two decades, but it is only now coming to New York, with shows this week at Joe's Pub and S.O.B.'s. (See page 20.)

ART

"BUSY COLORS"

The Sculpture Center, housed in a hundred-year-old steel-and-brick building in Long Island City that was once home to a trolley-car factory, has soaring ceilings, an abundance of natural light, and a crane, all of which are put to excellent use in Ayşe Erkmen's site-specific installation. (See page 24.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

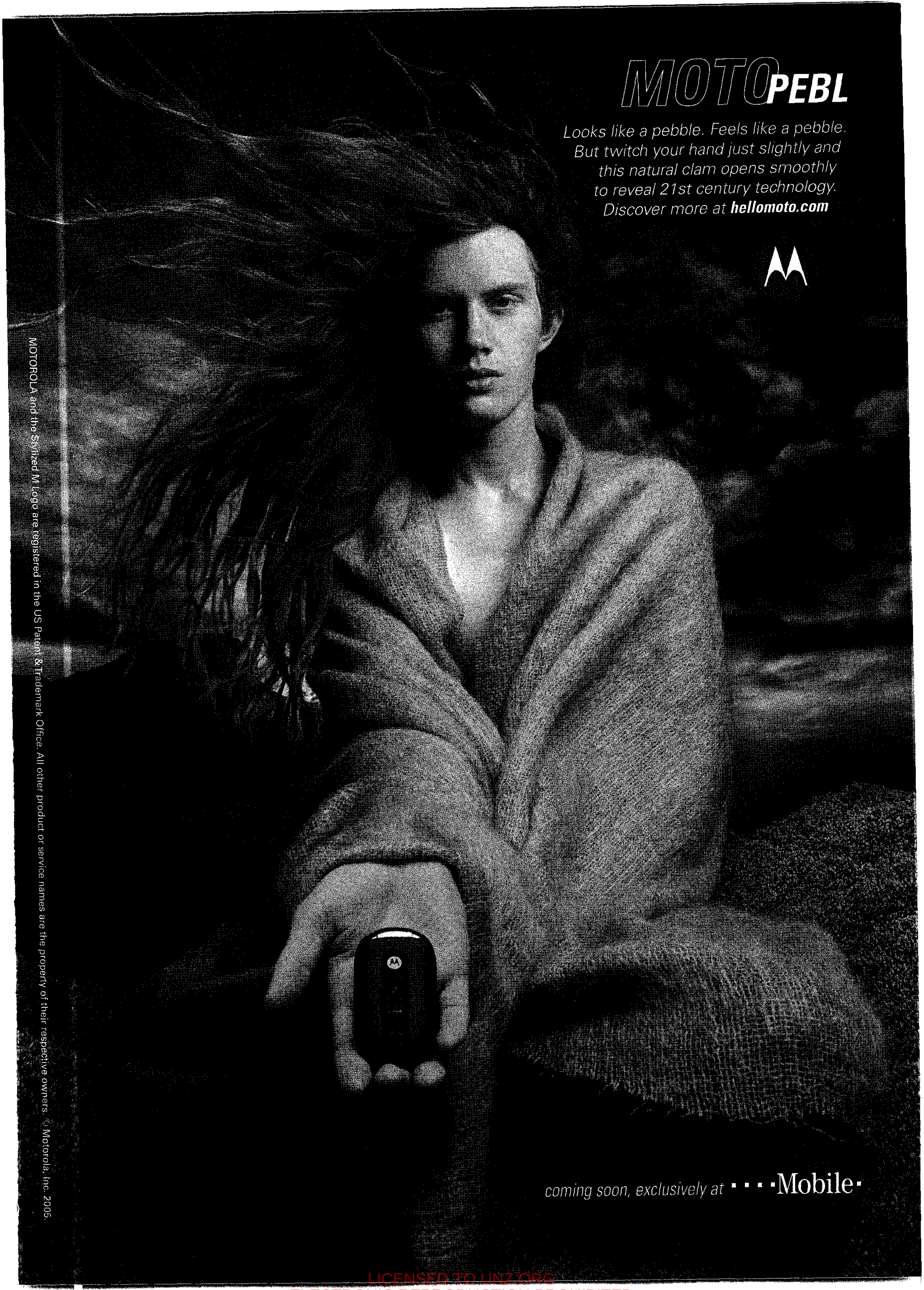
FINDING SHELTER

The three composers of Bang on a Can—Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, and David Lang—return to BAM with their latest collaborative work, "Shelter," a multimedia performance that features a libretto by Deborah Artman and direction by Bob McGrath, of the Ridge Theatre. (See page 31.)

MOVIES

BELGIAN MODERN

Born in Brussels in 1950, Chantal Akerman started making films as a teen-ager. Anthology Film Archives is presenting a six-film retrospective of her work; it includes "Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles," the epic formalist/feminist masterpiece that she made at age twenty-four, and the graceful, oblique romance "Toute une Nuit" (1982). (See page 36.)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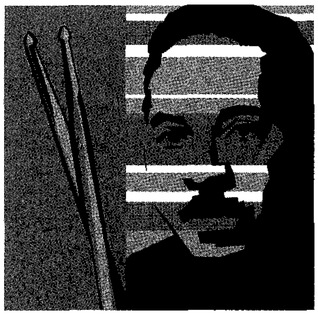
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
IN TIME



KIM DEMARCO

Zigaboo Modeliste, the drummer for the New Orleans instrumental quartet the Meters, is one of the greatest drummers in the history of pop music. Those who do not tremble at the sound of his name have probably heard him, either on seventies staples like Dr. John's "Right Place, Wrong Time" or Labelle's "Lady Marmalade," or more recently on the 2005 hit by Amerie, "1 Thing," built by the producer Rich Harrison from a sample of the Meters' 1970 recording "Oh, Calcutta!" The song's stumbling rhythms and pinpoint guitar chords are typical of the Meters' genius for subdivision, splitting music into atomically small pieces but never betraying the beat. After breaking up in the late seventies, the band re-formed in 1989 without Modeliste. Now fully reunited—a decision that predated Hurricane Katrina—the band is performing a few dates in America, including an appearance on Nov. 25 at the Nokia Theatre in Times Square. Anyone who cares about funk, drumming, or funky drumming will see this event as only slightly less earthshaking than James Brown, at this late date, getting another, equally new bag.

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ABIGAIL'S PARTY
The New Group ("Avenue Q") presents the New York première of Mike Leigh's biting satire of British suburbia in the seventies, starring Jennifer Jason Leigh. Scott Elliott directs. In previews. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

CELEBRATION / THE ROOM
Neil Pepe directs two plays by the Nobel laureate Harold Pinter as part of the Atlantic Theatre Company's twentieth-anniversary season. "Celebration," from 1999, is about a wedding anniversary in a trendy restaurant, and "The Room," Pinter's first play, is set in a one-room London flat. Previews begin Nov. 16. (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE GENTLEMAN DANCING-MASTER
The Pearl presents the New York première of William Wycherley's Restoration satire about a pair of fops, one Spanish, the other French. Directed by Gus Kaikkonen. In previews. Opens Nov. 20. (80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

GRAND MAGASIN'S "5TH INTERNATIONAL FORUM OF CORPORATE CINEMA"
As part of the citywide "Act French" festival, the avant-garde troupe brings an ironic take on the instructional film to Brooklyn, in an onstage tutorial on how to keep people happy in the workplace. Nov. 17-20. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St. 718-254-8779.)

MISS WITHERSPOON
In a new play by Christopher Durang ("Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You"), Kristine Nielsen stars as a sardonic dead woman who is repeatedly reincarnated, much to her chagrin. Directed by Emily Mann. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

MR. MARMALADE
The Roundabout Theatre Company presents the New York première of Noah Haidle's comedy about adult behavior, as seen through the eyes of clever, acerbic children. Directed by Michael Greif. The cast includes Michael C. Hall ("Six Feet Under"). In previews. Opens Nov. 20. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE OTHER SIDE
Manhattan Theatre Club presents Ariel Dorfman's story about a couple living on the border of two war-ravaged countries as they await the return of their son, who ran away thirty years earlier. In previews. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ROPE
The Drama Dept. presents the play that the Alfred Hitchcock movie was based on, about two Oxford men who commit a murder to prove they can get away with it. Previews begin Nov. 21. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE RUBY SUNRISE
The artistic director of the Public, Oskar Eustis, directs this play by Rinne Groff, about an inventor named Ruby, who is trying to develop an electrical television, and her daughter, a television producer who tries to tell her mother's story twenty years later. Opens Nov. 16. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

SEASCAPE
Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, directed by Mark Lamos, about two couples who meet on a beach and contemplate life, death, and consciousness. With George Grizzard, Elizabeth Marvel, Frances Sternhagen, and Frederick Weller. In previews. Opens Nov. 21. (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

A TOUCH OF THE POET
Gabriel Byrne stars as Cornelius Melody, an Irish immigrant who poses as a gentleman in Boston circa 1828, in a Roundabout Theatre production of the Eugene O'Neill play. In previews. (Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE TRIP TO BOUNTIFUL
Signature Theatre Company presents Horton Foote's play about a strong-willed sixty-year-old woman (Lois Smith) who escapes her stifling life in Houston and embarks on a journey to return to her girlhood home in a small Texas town. Harris Yulin directs. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

WAITING FOR GODOT
Alan Hruksa directs the Samuel Beckett classic, in a production developed at the Actors' Studio. Opens Nov. 16. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE WOMAN IN WHITE
Andrew Lloyd Webber's new musical, adapted from Wilkie Collins's Victorian thriller, about an art tutor and his two pupils, all of whom are the victims of a crime apparently committed by a mysterious woman. In previews. Opens Nov. 17. (Marquis, 1535 Broadway. 212-307-4100.)

NOW PLAYING

ALMOST HEAVEN: THE SONGS OF JOHN DENVER
It takes only a nudge to put John Denver's wistful folk ballads into the realm of soapy nostalgia, and Harold Thau's jukebox tribute does just that. A cast of six performs the Denver songbook, in a fond but thinly scripted revue that draws on letters from fans and bullet points from the singer's autobiography, "Take Me Home." Only Jim Newman, who brings a toothy modesty to his portrayal of Denver, is able to transcend the prevailing spirit of forced good cheer. Directed by Randal Myler ("It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues"). (Promenade, 2162 Broadway, at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

A.W.O.L.
The stage adaptation of Olivier Cadiot's novel "Colonel Zoo," in which a butler goes insane. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

BACH AT LEIPZIG
In this play inspired by actual events and written by Itamar Moses, seven rival musicians fight to fill the post of organ master at Leipzig. Directed by Pam MacKinnon. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

CAMBODIA AGONISTES
Willowy and doe-eyed, with a naïvely sweet soprano voice, the Dancer (Lydia Gaston) could almost be a heroine from early Disney. But in this uneven 1992 musical, she's a refugee from the killing fields, trying to undo her psychosomatic blindness with the help of an American social worker, who implores her to teach dance to the young. The movie-of-the-week writing pairs uneasily with Louis Stewart's minimalist, operatic score. Only the vivid visuals—a golden toilet, bloodied baby dolls, two traditional costumed dances—manage to evoke some of the horror and mystery of Cambodia in the seventies. (West End, 263 W. 86th St. 212-279-4200. Through Nov. 20.)

HAMLET
Michael Cumpsty takes the title role and reunites with the director Brian Kulick. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 212-677-4210.)

HILDA
A play by Marie Ndiaye about an upper-class Frenchwoman's obsession with her children's nanny. Directed by Carey Perloff. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

IN MY LIFE
An inspired train wreck. The unwieldy brainchild of Joseph Brooks (the composer of "You Light Up My Life"), this musical concerns the sudden infatuation between J.T. (Christopher J. Hanke), a songwriter with Tourette's syndrome, and Jenny (Jessica Boevers), an editor of personal ads. Their romance blossoms in a series of overblown pop ballads and is presided over, for some reason, by a glittery gay angel (David Turner) dressed in a variety of stunningly tacky costumes. Flanked by choruses of dancing pirates, skeletons, and French courtiers, Turner manages a few moments of sly humor amid the brazenly incoherent camp spectacle. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

JERSEY BOYS
The latest entry in the jukebox sweepstakes, which tells the story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons

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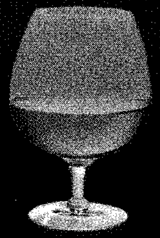

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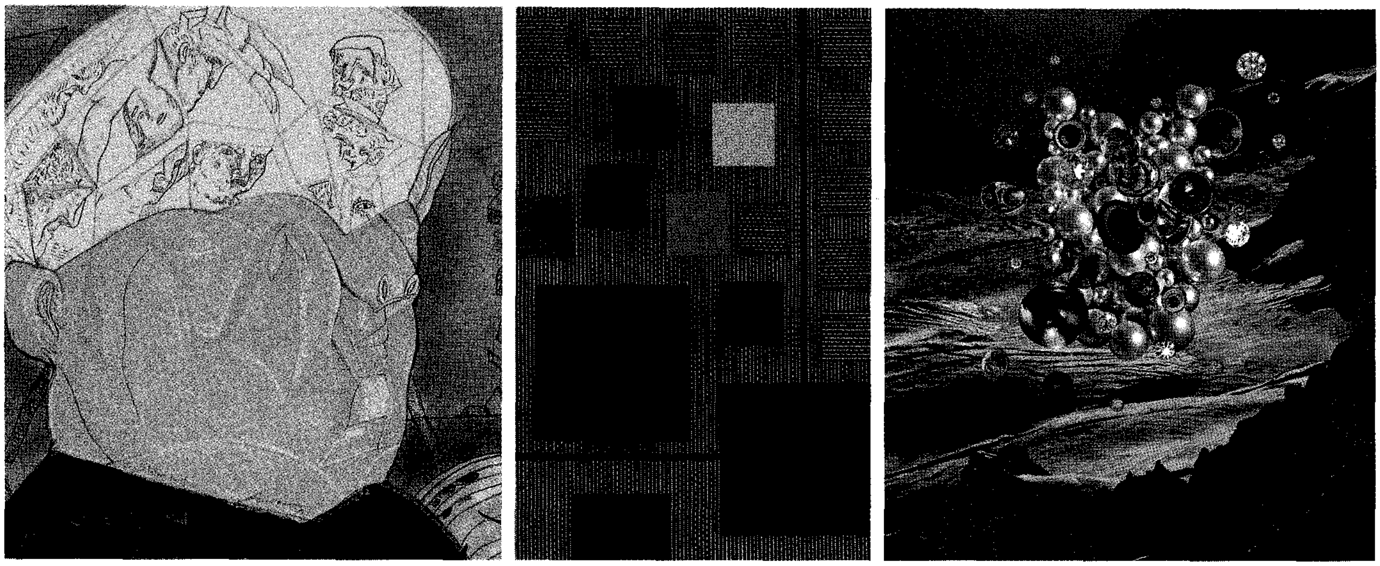


EL MUSEO DEL BARRIO
"El Museo's 4th Bienal:
The (S) Files/The Selected Files"
Through January 29, 2006
1230 Fifth Avenue (104th Street), New York
elmuseo.org

El Museo's bienal showcases cutting-edge art produced by forty emerging Latino and Latin American artists working in the Greater New York area. The pieces range from traditional media such as painting, drawing, photography, and video, to more experimental work incorporating sound, performative elements, interactive projects, and site-specific installations in the lobby and courtyard.

MEXIC-ARTE MUSEUM
"Collecting Latin-American Art"
November 18–December 31, 2005
419 Congress Avenue, Austin, Texas
mexic-artemuseum.org

As part of its mandate, Mexic-Arte Museum encourages the collecting of Latin American art. This annual educational showcase features works available for purchase and admission fees will be waived. The exhibition ranges from works by regional talents to paintings from contemporary international eminences such as José Luis Cuevas, and includes pieces from the collection of master printer, Ernest F. de Soto.

THE MUSEUM OF LATIN AMERICAN ART
"Jesús Rafael Soto: The Universality of
the Immaterial"
November 20, 2005–March 19, 2006
628 Alamitos Avenue, Long Beach, California
molaa.org

Venezuelan master Jesús Rafael Soto is celebrated for his contributions to the avant-garde in his home country as well as his key role as a founder of the kinetic art movement in Europe and Latin America. This show is the first major exhibition of Soto's work since the artist's death in January of this year. It spotlights his groundbreaking, three-dimensional constructions that produce optical vibrations, modifying the viewer's perspective.

Left to right: José Luis Cuevas, "MacBeth" (det.), 1987; Jesûs Rafael Soto, "Color a la Izquierda" (det.), 1993; Fay Ray, "Afterbirth on A Quiet Earth No. 1" (det.), 2004 (at the August Wilson, under the rollicking direction of Des McAnuff), looks to be a winner. The splendid actors—Christian Hoff, J. Robert Spencer, Daniel Reichard, and, especially, John Lloyd Young, as Valli—take turns narrating the group's rise from lower-class Jersey doo-woppers to Rock and Roll Hall of Famers, and they're as tight musically as they are persuasive dramatically. Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice have written a clever book; it sets up the songs with well-judged humor and the elegant strokes of observation that the Four Seasons' repertoire lacks. This is direct, pedal-to-the-metal stuff—the sound, as the show insists, of the working people. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/14/05.) (245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

A MOTHER, A DAUGHTER AND A GUN
Olympia Dukakis, Veanne Cox, and George S. Irving star in a new comedy by Barra Grant, about the emotional relationship between mothers and daughters. Jonathan Lynn ("My Cousin Vinny") directs. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. Through Nov. 20.)

THE ODD COUPLE
In this revival, surprisingly, Neil Simon's enduring masterpiece loses some of its flavor. Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick hit Simon's notes, but they don't quite capture the music of his humor. The Oscar Madison described in the script is the quintessence of loosey-goosey, but Lane's nerviness is part of his campy comic appeal—you can put him in sneakers and drape his portly body in an unbuttoned shirt, but he still has the metabolism of a hamster. Thus, the nervous alertness that rightly belongs to the meticulous Felix has been usurped by Lane's snappy performance, and Broderick has no choice but to play against the attack of his co-star. The lack of animus in Broderick's sedate approach somehow lowers the heat in the argument. Still, it doesn't stop him from getting his share of laughs. (11/7/05) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

RFK
A drama about Robert F. Kennedy, focussing on the summer of 1964. Written and performed by Jack Holmes. Directed by Larry Moss. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

SEE WHAT I WANNA SEE
Michael John LaChiusa's new musical, a series of four scenes adapted from stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa, has attracted a first-rate cast and is expertly mounted by the director Ted Sperling. But, as is typical of LaChiusa's work, it is situated somewhere between talent and pretension—or, in this case, between medieval Japan and contemporary Central Park. In one story, Kesa (the fine-voiced Idina Menzel), a Japanese woman in a silk kimono, sings of seeing her lover, Morito (the superb Marc Kudisch), for the last time, in words that don't quite have that medieval ring. In another, a priest (Henry Stram) who has lost his faith has a vision. When he asks his aunt if she believes that he saw a miracle, she replies, "If you say so, baby. Why not?" Truth, you see, is relative. (11/14/04) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

SOUVENIR
In a play with music by Stephen Temperley, Judy Kaye stars as Florence Foster Jenkins. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SWEENEY TODD
Under the bold direction and design of John Doyle, this imported British revival at the Eugene O'Neill, which shrinks the cast of thirty to ten, with actors doubling as musicians, is almost unbearably exciting. With eight chairs, a coffin, and a ladder, Doyle conjures up a universe of woe and wonder; the actors are not just characters and musicians—they are also the scenery. Sweeney (Michael Cerveris), who was transported to Australia for fifteen years on a trumped-up charge by a judge who lusted after his wife, returns to London in disguise to find his wife apparently dead and his beloved daughter the ward of the very judge who sent him away. Cerveris is a terrifying Sweeney, a model of sulfurous restraint. Patti LuPone, as his pragmatic and pathological helpmate, Mrs. Lovett, is a gargoyle of toughness, and positively Weimar. As life and theatre have taught us, there is no escape from the power of the perverse. (11/14/05) (230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.)

THIRD
The title of Wendy Wasserstein's genial but aimless new play (at the Mitzi E. Newhouse, directed by Daniel Sullivan) refers to the nickname of a Groton-educated college wrestling star (Jason Ritter) who finds himself in the literature class of an iconoclastic professor named Laurie Jameson (the admirable Dianne Wiest). Third writes a compelling paper on "King Lear," but Jameson's idée fixe of him as "a walking red state" prevents her from acknowledging his originality. Instead, she accuses him of plagiarism. Jameson provides no proof for her claim, and Wasserstein provides no real drama other than Third's eloquent soliloquy in his own defense. But the play is given a hefty push by the eighty-year-old veteran Charles Durning, who, as Jameson's forgetful father, transcends the play with his grace and his grief. (11/7/05) (Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

ABSURD PERSON SINGULAR: Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **CHICAGO:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **FOOLS IN LOVE:** Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200. **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT:** 47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **THE GREAT AMERICAN TRAILER PARK MUSICAL:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **LATINOLOGUES:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-239-6200. **MANIC FLIGHT REACTION:** Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. (Through Nov. 20.) **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **MOVIN' OUT:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100. **A NAKED GIRL ON THE APPIAN WAY:** American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. **ONE-MAN STAR WARS TRILOGY:** Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ON SECOND AVENUE:** J.C.C., 334 Amsterdam Ave. 212-230-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **A SOLDIER'S PLAY:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BAM CAFÉ
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4139)—Nov. 18: The vocalist **Daniel Isengart** takes on the material of the late German New Wave icon Klaus Nomi. Nov. 19: **Songs from a Random House,** a ukulele-driven (they've got two of them) surreal-pop group.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 16-17: The country singer and biodiesel advocate **Willie Nelson.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 17-18: Led by Luther and Cody Dickinson, sons of the legendary producer and musician Jim Dickinson, the **North Mississippi Allstars** crank out Southern roots rock that transcends generations. Nov. 19: **Donna the Buffalo,** a winning ensemble from Ithaca, New York, that seasons its down-home sound with a touch of reggae.

BROOKLYN CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS
Brooklyn College, Campus Rd. at Hillel Pl. (718-951-4500)—Nov. 18: The legendary calypsonian **Mighty Sparrow.**

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 16: The meticulous Grateful Dead cover band the **Dark**

TABLES FOR TWO
CRISPO

240 W. 14th St. (212-229-1818)—Faced with Crispo's long, Seussian menu (zany typeface, lots of ham), it seemed natural to ask for some guidance. "Would you like to order vegetarian?" a pleasant but firm waiter began. "Are you allergic to pine nuts?" The table went for the bone marrow: four troughs of elemental, gooey pith. After the waiter's schoolteacher tone, prosciutto and figs, with velvety ribbons of meat swaddling the pink fruit, seemed best enjoyed as finger food.

Frank Crispo, who opened the restaurant three years ago after two decades in various New York kitchens, has a reputation as a chef's chef, but here he's put together a menu that will appeal to everybody (Crispo's policy of keeping entrées under twenty dollars helps the cause). The *stricci,* a dish of triangular ravioli sealed and striated with the prongs of a fork, was stuffed with butternut squash and had an earthy sweetness. The whole branzino was served with a cipolline onion at the throat, while the hanger steak balanced the delicate flavor of a red-wine reduction with its own savory jus. And potato croquettes—buttery, upscale tater tots—redeemed a bland veal *medaglione.* The only off note was bananas flambé, which arrived on a doily and tasted fermented, like banana wine.

Crispo is meant to be an Italian trattoria, a point somewhat obscured by its décor of antique light fixtures, strung-up sausages, and photographs of waterfalls. ("Oh, the gentleman who lives next door took them in Brazil," a hostess said.) Then there's the neighborhood. Stuck between the West Village and Chelsea, Crispo, despite its sure-handed food, doesn't seem like a place where anyone really wants to linger. On a Saturday night, the dining room was busy at 9, but almost empty at 10:30. The remaining group was pounding drinks and singing Bon Jovi, pretty loudly. "NYC will tow cars after 11 PM parked on 14th St. between 7th and 8th," the menu warned, and the fingerprint motif that adorns the matchbooks and bill holders began to look less like a stamp of character than a plea for identity. (Open every night for dinner. Entrées $17.50 to $19.50.)

—*Lauren Collins*

Star Orchestra. Nov. 17: San Francisco's **Dead Kennedys** became one of the preëminent punk bands of the eighties, thanks to their manic playing and the social satire of their vocalist, Jello Biafra. They broke up in 1986, though, in a maelstrom of lawsuits, one of which involved accusations of obscenity based on the H. R. Giger poster included in the band's 1985 album, "Frankenchrist." In a turn of events that's truly shocking to punk purists, the band has reunited sans Biafra. The newcomer Jeff Penalty is on vocals. Nov. 20: **Echo & the Bunnymen** split up at the end of the eighties but have since re-formed and are enjoying a lengthy second wind, though there are now only two members of the original lineup—the guitarist Will Sergeant and the vocalist Ian McCulloch. Nov. 21: The Belgian industrial combo **Front 242** has spent the past twenty-four years honing a fusion of mechanized noise and danceable rhythms. The highly disciplined assault is known as "electronic body music."

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 16: **Konono Nº1,** an ensemble from the Congo, has an enticing D.I.Y. approach. They build their own microphones from car parts, and their percussion section includes pots, pans, and more car parts. Their music is distorted and raucous in the manner of the finest rock bands. Nov. 17: The alt-country siren **Neko Case.** Nov. 19: The cabaret-pop-jazz fusion of the San Francisco vocalist **Spencer Day.** Nov. 21: The insightful indie-rocker **Erin McKeown.**

LIVING ROOM

154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Mondays in November, the guitarist and singer **Mike Viola** takes a break from his role with the local Beatle-esque outfit the Candy Butchers for a run of solo shows. Later that night, the guitarist **Jim Campilongo** continues his popular, long-running residency. Nov. 18: The actor, musician, and composer **Aldo Perez** holds court with his art-rock band Psycho the Clown, which is known for, among other things, performing in seven languages.

MO PITKIN'S HOUSE OF SATISFACTION

34 Avenue A, between 2nd and 3rd Sts. (212-777-5660)—Nov. 17: **Rachelle Garniez,** a local singer-songwriter who also plays the accordion, wanders through the genres of country, jazz, and pop, leaving behind nothing but sweet wreckage. Nov. 18: **Las Rubias del Norte** rearrange Latin big-band music for a handful of instruments, including the glockenspiel. The group is small, but their sound and passion are anything but.

NEW YORK SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE

2 W. 64th St. (212-874-5210)—Nov. 20: **Bingo.** Once upon a time, the composer and pianist Roger Davidson improvised a samba version of "Baa Baa, Black Sheep" for his children. He was so pleased with the result that he assembled a group of fine jazz musicians and recorded an album of children's songs set to Brazilian and Caribbean rhythms. They celebrate the release of their eponymous CD with an afternoon show.

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE

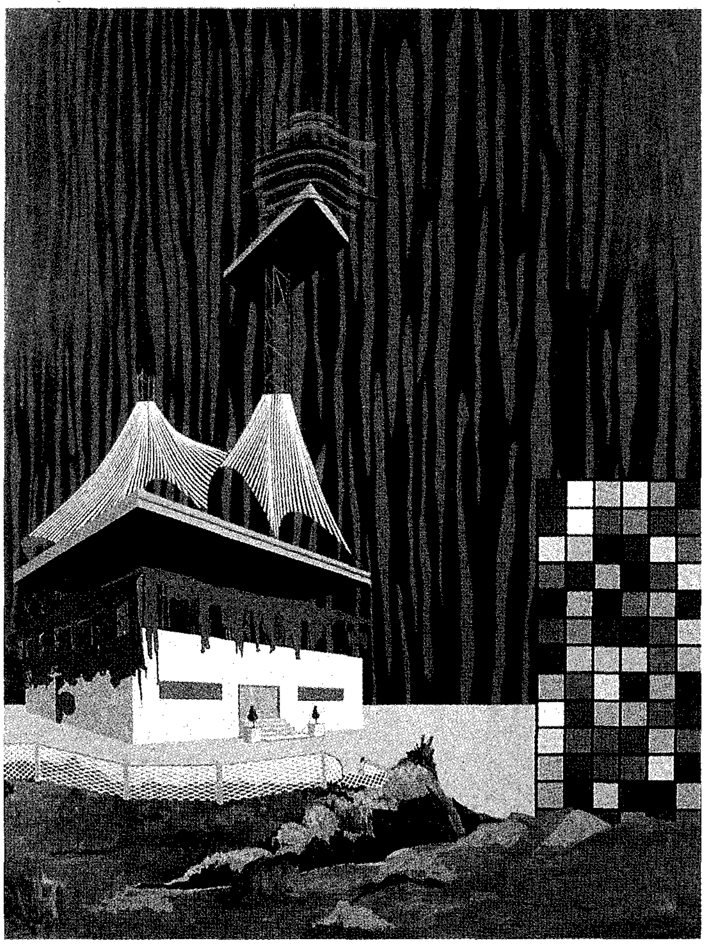
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—Nov. 16-17: **Coheed & Cambria,** specialists in the long-lost art of the concept album (their latest, "Good Apollo I'm Burning Star IV, Vol. 1: From Fear Through the Eyes of Madness," is part of a sci-fi epic about—what else?—the end of the world). Complicated time signatures and complex narratives aside, they deliver their songs with a straight-ahead thrust. It's high-level progressive rock made all the more palatable by the falsetto vocals of their front man, Claudio Sanchez. Nov. 20: **Bad Religion** and **Pennywise** represent two generations of no-nonsense American punk and are required listening for anyone who has ever owned a skateboard.

SATALLA

37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Nov. 16: **Brave Combo.** Polka rock is by definition goofy, and this Texas outfit has been playing it quite successfully since the early seventies. In the process they've embraced an unquantifiable number of ethnic-music strains and left their mark on the likes of Weird Al Yankovic and They Might Be Giants. Nov. 17: **Roomful of Blues,** one of Rhode Island's most durable exports, has seen numerous personnel changes in its nearly forty-year history, but its commitment to hard-hitting, horn-driven testimonials has never wavered.

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Nov. 17: **Konono Nº1** (see Joe's Pub).



Dean Monogenis's "Base Camp" (2004), at Stux through Nov. 26.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Nov. 19: The exceptional pianist **Bill Charlap** supports his mother, the vocalist **Sandy Stewart.**

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 15-20: **Toots Thielemans,** jazz's foremost harmonica virtuoso, has a passion for Brazilian music—his 1987 collaboration with Elis Regina, "Aquarela do Brasil," is a classic. He's in good company with the guitarist **Oscar Castro-Neves,** the percussionist **Airto Moreira,** and the simpatico American pianist **Kenny Werner.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Few pianists have more jazz history at their fingertips than **Marcus Roberts** (here with his trio Nov. 15-20), who can summon up Jelly Roll Morton as easily as he can Herbie Hancock. Still, he's no slave to the past. With his responsive trio, Roberts flings about rhythms and harmony in extravagant fashion, answering to his own muse alone.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Nov. 15-26: **Michele Lee.** "Knots Landing," the hit prime-time soap she co-starred in for fourteen seasons, may be the jewel in Lee's pop-culture crown, but in the sixties and seventies she once lit up Broadway as a singer and dancer in "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying" and "Seesaw."

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Nov. 17-20: Does anyone remember when **Roy Ayers** was a swinging young vibraphonist with a bright future in modern jazz? Maybe not even Ayers himself, who traded it all in for R. & B. and funk some time ago and has been riding the retro wagon ever since. He's joined by another jazzer gone pop, the flutist **Bobbi Humphrey.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Twenty-five years ago, **Wynton Marsalis** was a teen-age trumpet whiz with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers. Today he's arguably the world's most famous and most culturally powerful jazz musician. On Nov. 17-19 in the Rose Theatre, he celebrates a quarter century in the music business with his quintet, backed by a string orchestra. The brass virtuoso will have ample opportunity to demonstrate his instrumental prowess, essaying new arrangements of music from his own "Midnight Blue" and "Hot House Flowers" albums.

JAZZ GALLERY

290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Nov. 19: The young saxophonist **Marcus Strickland** has performed with such prestigious units as the Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall jazz orchestras, as well as with Roy Haynes and Lonnie Plaxico.

JAZZ STANDARD

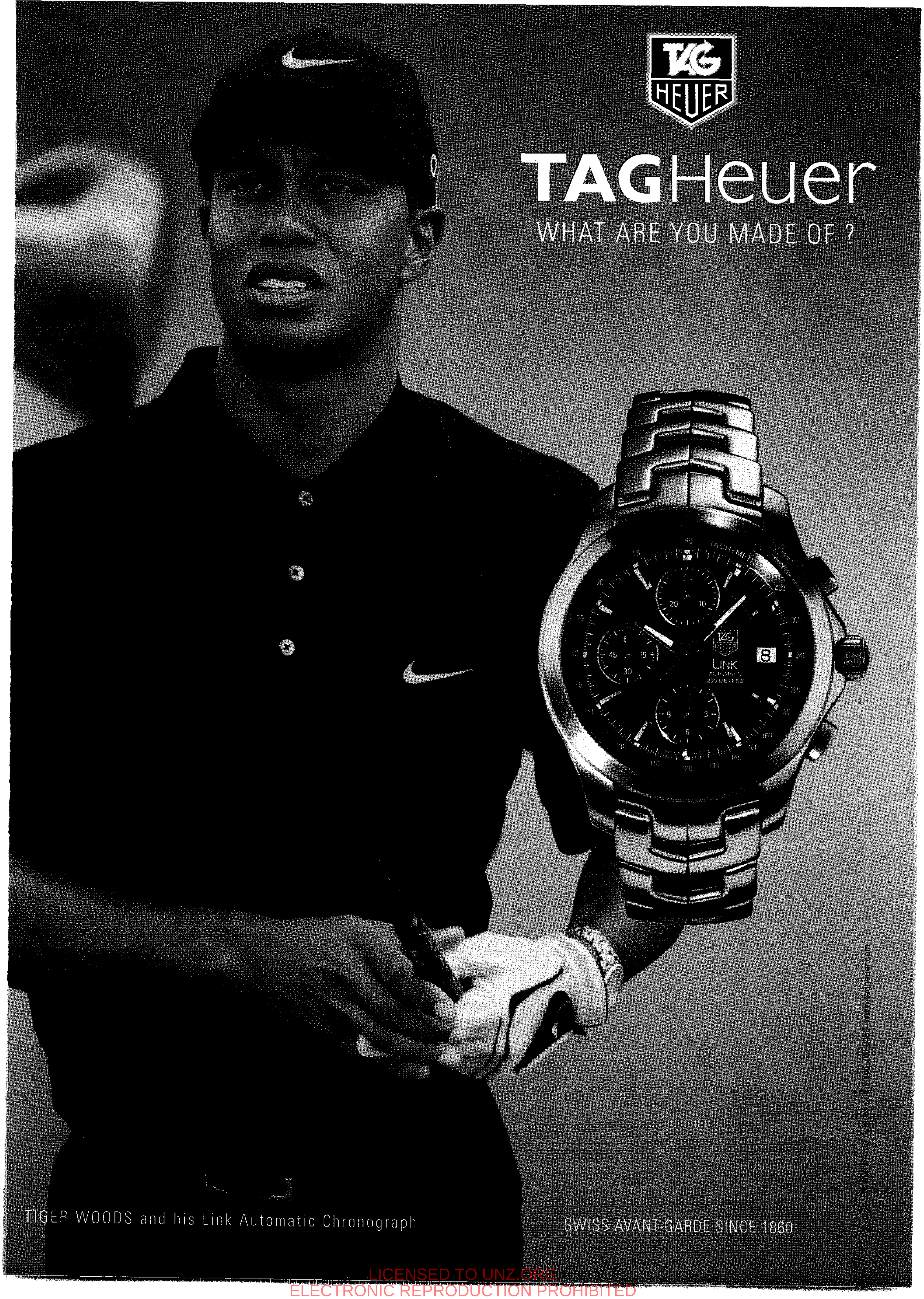
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 15-16: Three hard-bop veterans—the pianist **John Hicks,** the bassist **Buster Williams,** and the drummer **Louis Hayes**—form a trio. Nov. 17-20: **Greg Osby** is the modern bandleader to put your money on. He's an altoist with his own sound—bright and metallic-toned, with a rhythmic energy that follows its own skewed metronome—and he's fast becoming the Art Blakey of his day, collecting a coterie of sharp young players around him. His newest discovery is the twenty-two-year-old bassist **Matthew Brewer,** who is a part of his quartet (here the first three nights of the run) and his trio (here the last two), the latter group having recently released the CD "Channel Three."

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 16: **Luciana Souza's** recordings with jazz ensembles are an acquired taste, but the singer's recent albums, "Brazilian Duos" and "Duos II," in which she's backed by a rotating cast of noteworthy guitarists, are unqualified triumphs. **Romero Lubambo,** a veteran of those recordings, joins her here.

SWEET RHYTHM

88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Nov. 18-19: **Maurice Brown,** a promising young trumpeter out of New Orleans, fleshes his quintet out with the redoubtable rhythm team of the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Billy Drummond.**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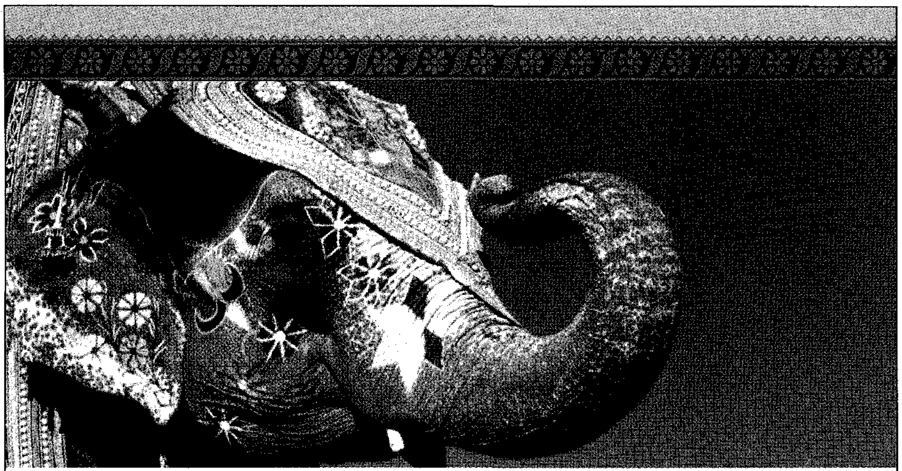

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VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Nov. 15-20: The **Lou Donaldson** quartet. With one foot in well-turned bop soil and the other in R. & B. territory, the alto saxophonist Donaldson produces both virtuosity and entertainment. He's joined here by **Dr. Lonnie Smith** on organ. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

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MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Fra Angelico"** presents some seventy-five paintings, drawings, and illuminated manuscripts by the fifteenth-century Tuscan artist, as well as additional works by his assistants and followers. Through Jan. 29. ♦ **"Vincent van Gogh: The Drawings."** Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"Santiago Calatrava: Sculpture Into Architecture."** Through March 5. ♦ For the exhibition **"Pearls of the Parrot of India: The Emperor Akbar's Illustrated 'Khamsa,' 1597-98,"** a tranquil, crimson-hued gallery holds manuscripts, unbound for conservation, that demonstrate the early Mughal's taste for violence and virtuosity in painting. The Sufi poet Amir Khusrau Dihlavi's five-tale "Khamsa" is illustrated with vibrant landscapes, theatrical figures, and intricately drawn *shamsa* rosettes, best seen through a magnifying glass. Philosophy and spirituality are leavened with timelessly gruesome narrative tactics, from the scene in which "A Virtuous Woman Plucks Out Her Eyes and Sends Them to the King to Silence His Persistent Entreaties" to the age-old judicial ploy of assuaging the plaintiff with a financial settlement: "Having Accidentally Killed a Youth, a King Offers to Make Amends to the Aggrieved Mother by Giving Her a Choice of a Basin Bearing His Own Head or One Heaped with Gold." Through March 12. ♦ **"Prague: The Crown of Bohemia, 1347-1437."** Through Jan. 3. ♦ The pre-Photoshop images in **"The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult"** were purported to depict ghosts, spirit writing, ectoplasm, and the like. Through Dec. 31. ♦ **"David Milne Watercolors: 'Painting Toward the Light.'"** A subset of a larger show organized by the Art Gallery of Ontario, these forty-five watercolor depictions of New York State scenes provide a rare chance to see the work of the Canadian artist (1882-1953) outside his home country. Through Jan. 29. ♦ The centerpiece of **"The Art of Medicine in Ancient Egypt"** is a fifteen-foot papyrus (ca. 1650-1550 B.C.), on loan from the New York Academy of Medicine, explaining the diagnosis and treatment of wounds to the head, neck, and shoulders by means both scientific and magical. Ointment jars, statues of healing gods, implements, and mummies are also on view. Through Jan. 16. ♦ **"Rara Avis: Selections from the Iris Barrel Apfel Collection."** Through Jan. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Beyond the Visible: The Art of Odilon Redon,"** a retrospective of paintings and drawings by the French symbolist (1840-1916). Through Jan. 23. ♦ The retrospective exhibition **"Elizabeth Murray"** includes many of the shaped and splintered canvases covered with energizing color combinations for which the artist is best known. In the second-floor galleries, a selection of Murray's prints adapt similar techniques to paper. Through Jan. 9. ♦ **"Stillness: Michael Snow/Sam Taylor Wood,"** a small show of photographs and video works. Through Nov. 28. ♦ The fever-pitch of post-9/11 anxiety is simultaneously stoked and suppressed in **"SAFE: Design Takes on Risk,"** an exhibition of objects designed to ward off, stanch, or manage disaster. Some are tongue in cheek, like the desk-cum-panic room built by a British collective called Design for Fragile Personalities in Anxious Times or Ralph Borland's "Suit for Subversion," a padded outfit for street protesters reminiscent of sports-team mascot costumes. Protective face masks and hoods, chemical-resistant booties, land-mine detectors, and a bullet-resistant blouse *counter the glib tone.* Through Jan. 2. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—The sprawling exhibition **"Russia!"** includes most everything you might think could fit under that rubric: gilt religious icons dating from the Middle Ages, Renaissance-era Western European paintings from imperial collections, romanticized portraits of peasant life, socialist-realist propaganda, early modernist masterworks from the collections of industrialists, videos made just this year. Through Jan. 11. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—Ed Ruscha's installation of paintings **"The Course of Empire"**—which shares a name and theme with Thomas Cole's 1836 cycle of paintings, in the New-York Historical Society's permanent collection—was a hit at the Venice Biennale, and will be on view at the Whitney starting Nov. 17. ♦ **"The Art of Richard Tuttle."** Through Feb. 5. ♦ **"Raymond Pettibon."** Representatives from most of the significant subcultures portrayed in Pettibon's work are included in these thirty-seven drawings: the surfers gliding down ukiyo-e-style waves, the tragic-iconic baseball players, lonesome antiheroes and antiheroines inspired by pinups and comic books. An animated film created from drawings recalls William Kentridge's drawn animations but possesses little of their power. The glib voices accompanying the moving images are a sharp contrast to the ghostly, disembodied voice of the pictures, whose genuineness and authority are at the crux of Pettibon's art. Through Feb. 19. ♦ The retrospective **"Oscar Bluemner: A Passion for Color"** reveals a painter (1867-1938) who melded Old World influences with an architect's training and eye—updated later by the lessons of the Fauves, Die Brücke, and artists like Franz Marc—to produce images of buildings and landscapes broken into bright structural shards, like segments of stained glass. Through Feb. 12. ♦ **"Building and Breaking the Grid, 1962-2002."** Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"Still Life: A Vital Theme."** Through Jan. 15. ♦ **"The New City: Sub/Urbia in Recent Photography."** Through Jan. 15. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Darwin"** traces the discoveries and influence of the great naturalist (1809-82) with, among other things, a re-creation of his study, samples of fossils he collected, and live specimens of the tortoises, frogs, and iguanas he encountered in his travels to the Galápagos Islands. Through May 29. ♦ **"Dinosaurs: Ancient Fossils, New Discoveries,"** a review of recent developments in the study of dinosaurs, provides insight into how the animals moved through their world. Through Jan. 8. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter"** is back for an eighth year. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Tree of Paradise: Jewish Mosaics from the Roman Empire."** Ancient Mediterranean multiculturalism is revealed in Jewish art from Northern Africa that conjures Greece and Rome. Mosaics from an excavated synagogue in Hammam Lif, Tunisia—the first of more than three hundred synagogues eventually discovered in the area—employ Roman symbols and motifs, from the date-palm Tree of Knowledge to ducks and quail scattered throughout the composition. A nineteenth-century schematic sketches in what's missing, while textile fragments, jewelry, coins, and figurative sculptures demonstrate how Jewish communities in the late Roman Empire flourished, producing art on par with their more famous pagan neighbors'. Through June 4. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—An international quintet of self-taught artists have work on view in **"Obsessive Drawing."** Through March 19. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays and weekends, 10:30 to 5:30, and Fridays 10:30 to 7:30.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—Some one hundred paintings by the Netherlandish artist Hans Memling (ca. 1435-94) survive; of the thirty portraits, twenty are at the Frick for the exhibition **"Mem-**

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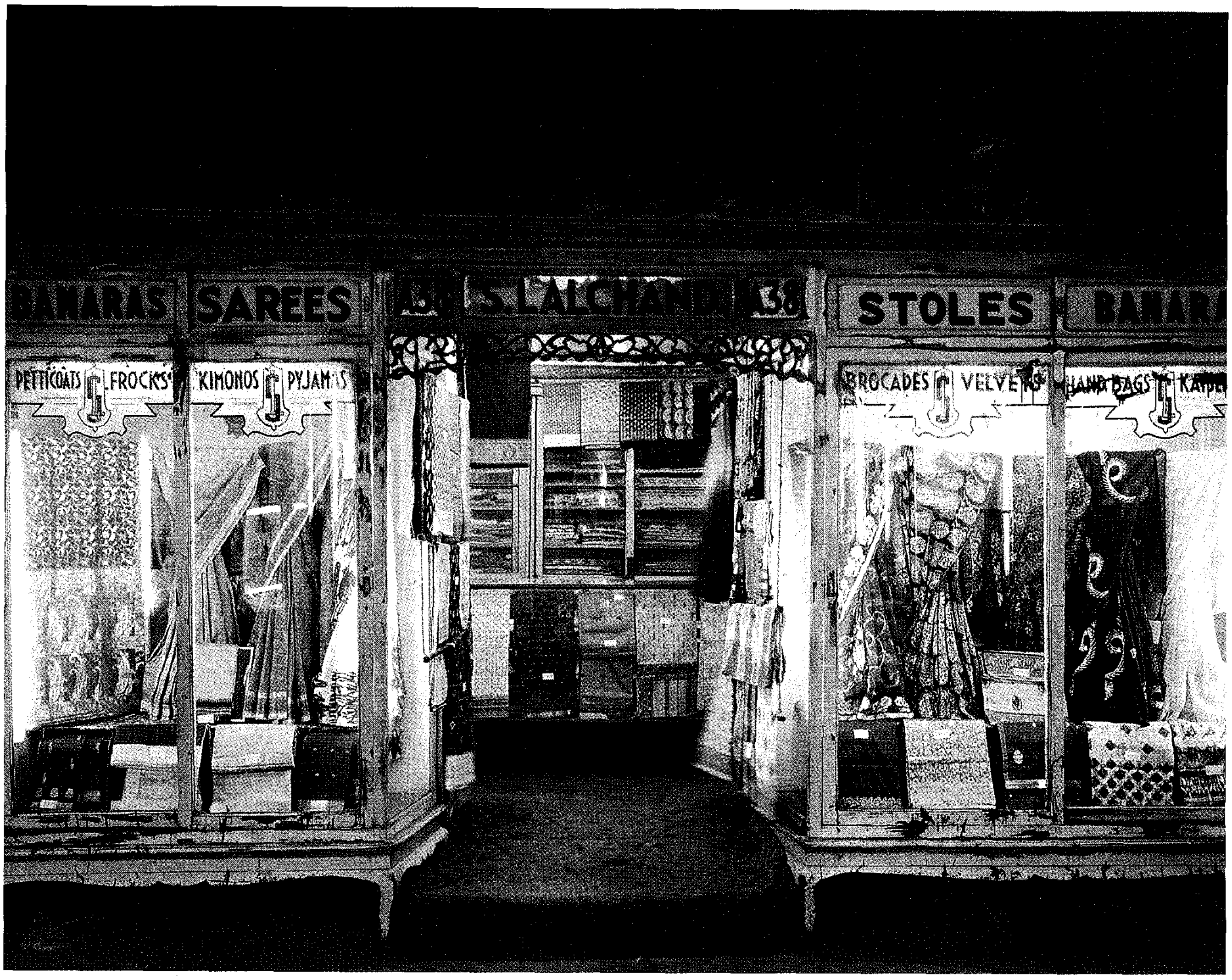

"Saree Shop, Newmarket" (1998) is from Laura McPhee's series of photographs taken in Calcutta, at Benrubi.

ling's Portraits." Through Dec. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

GROLIER CLUB

47 E. 60th St. (212-838-6690)—**"No Other Appetite: Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes, and the Blood Jet of Poetry"** presents manuscripts, letters, photographs, and more from the poets' archives. Through Nov. 19. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"André Kertész."** Through Nov. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Egon Schiele,"** an exhibition of a hundred and fifty paintings and drawings by the Austrian artist, who died in 1918 at the age of twenty-eight. Through Feb. 20. (Open Fridays, 11 to 9, and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Slavery in New York."** Through March 5. ♦ **"Nature and the American Vision."** Through Feb. 5. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

"PERFORMA05"

This extensive program of performance by visual artists is projected to be the first of a biannual series. Artists include Marina Abramović, Laurie Simmons, Christian Marclay, Jesper Just, Sislej Xhafa, and Francis Alÿs, among many others. At venues around the city through Nov. 21. For schedules, locations, and information on tickets and reservations, see www.performa-arts.org.

THE SCULPTURE CENTER

44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—Housed in a former trolley-car factory, the Sculpture Center features a cathedral vault lit by clerestory windows with a working gantry that traverses the whole space. For her installation "Busy Colors," **Ayşe Erkmen** makes use of this kinetic industrial relic to great effect. At each end of the cavernous room, a huge sheet of silky fabric—one pink, one turquoise—is attached to a high frame and also to the gantry. As the crane moves slowly across the ceiling, one panel folds into a billowing wall while the other stretches to become a tentlike ceiling; after a few moments, the mechanism slides back the other way and the panels swap positions. It's simple, and mesmerizing. Through Nov. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

ALBERTO GIACOMETTI

The bulk of the work in this show is from Giacometti's existential period—the attenuated stick figures from the forties and fifties that, despite their popularity, are considered in art-historical circles inferior to his earlier, Surrealist contributions. A version of the iconic "Woman with her Throat Cut" (1932) is included, however, alongside the craggy, primordial humanoids. In case you didn't realize these were women, the show's title, "The Women of Giacometti," assists in clarifying, although the artist's relationships with women—notably his mother, wife, and models—remain more backdrop than foreground theme. Through Dec. 17. (PaceWildenstein, 32 E. 57th St. 212-421-3292.)

LAURA MCPHEE / HIROSHI WATANABE

McPhee's big, engrossing studies of Calcutta façades and interiors are in the main space here, but Watanabe's small portraits of Kabuki performers in the gallery's Red Room are even more seductive. Thirty of these subtly toned black-and-white images—busts, profiles, and several rear views of very young actors in some of Japan's amateur companies—are hung in grids on the blood-red walls. Photographed backstage between performances, Watanabe's subjects present masklike but hardly inexpressive faces to the camera, and their combination of distracted self-consciousness and defiant self-possession is hard to resist. Through Nov. 26. (Benrubi, 41 E. 57th St. 212-888-6007.)

Short List

JOHN GRAHAM: Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997. Through Dec. 22. **YVES KLEIN:** L & M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through Dec. 10. **BARRY LE VA:** Mary Boone, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-752-2929. Through Dec. 17. **CHARLES MARVILLE:** Howard Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through Dec. 3. **CLAES OLDENBURG:** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through Dec. 23. **COLLIER SCHORR:** Roth, 160A E. 70th St. 212-717-9067. Through Dec. 17. **CY TWOMBLY:** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave. 212-744-2313. Through Dec. 24. **CHRIS WARE:** Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338. Through Dec. 3.

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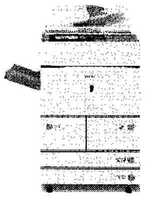

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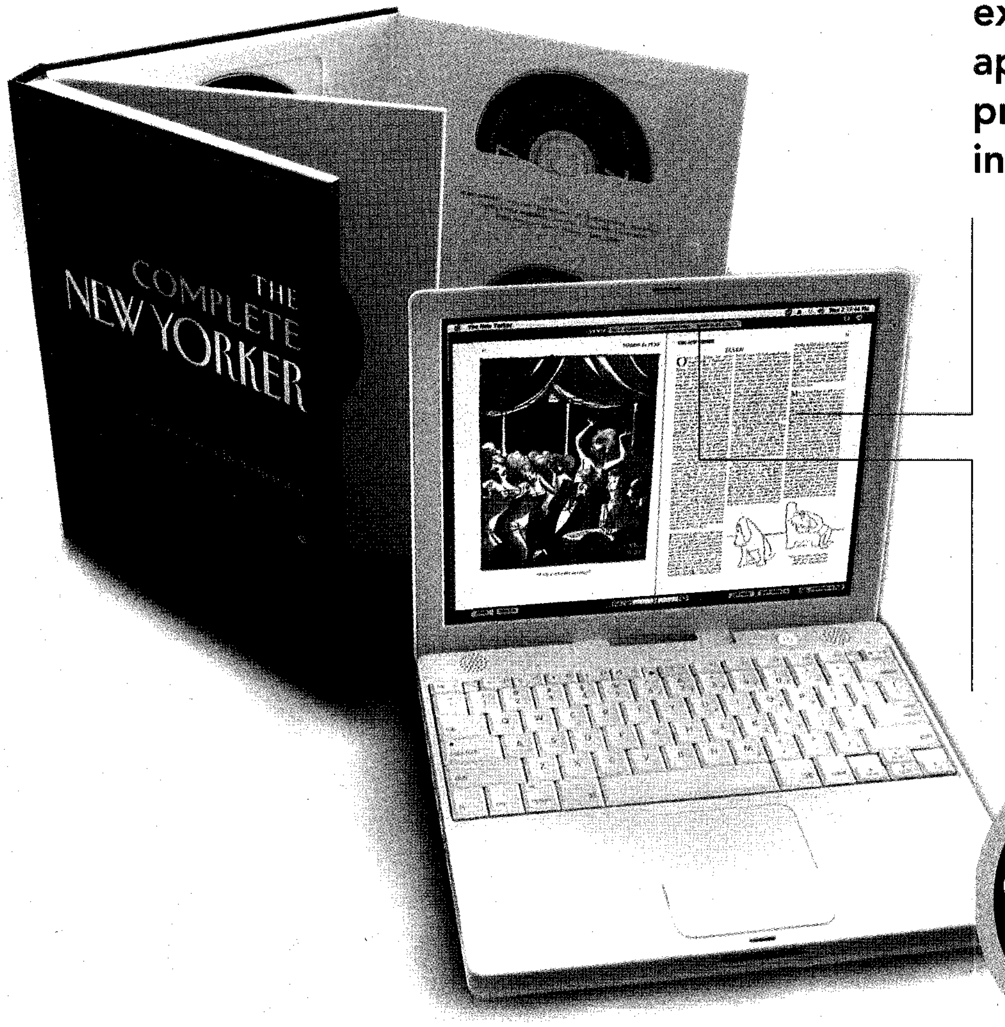

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GALLERIES—CHELSEA

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN
Unlike his earlier swaggering, expressive sculptures made of crushed-up auto parts, Chamberlain's recent works are more decorative, at times even delicate. The raw color inherited from salvage yards is now applied in his studio, and solids have given way to swirling tropical patterns that conjure textiles, loud wallpaper—even Matisse. New sculptures sport titles like "Thicket" and "Roots." A few are formed into compact cubes, playing against the tight, dense vernacular of minimalism, while others give the appearance of swaying seaweed, rising from the concrete bed of the gallery's floor. Through Dec. 3. (PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258.)

MONA HATOUM
Hatoum's sculptures return to a favorite theme—the domestic uncanny—with motifs of beds, basins, and carpets. Calling up images of the body swaddled, trapped, or alarmingly replaced by inanimate stand-ins, the central piece is a huge steel bedstead, which in place of a mattress presents a row of metal wires like clotheslines or power lines. Pinned to these are bits of linen, while underneath are child-sized furniture, a suitcase, and other household items. Subtler than this landscape of anxiety are Hatoum's nastily delicate "drawings" made with single strands or woven grids of brown or gray hair. Through Dec. 22. (Alexander and Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

LISE SARFATI
Sarfati, a French photographer well established in Europe, makes her U.S. solo début with modestly scaled color portraits of young Americans, many of whom pose in their homes as well as in public spaces. Although Sarfati has clearly attempted to connect with her solitary sitters, the work has an uneasy, staged quality that recalls Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Katy Grannan, and recent Nan Goldin. But this strain—and the sense that these kids are playing heightened versions of themselves—gives the photos a tension that the photographer further tightens with an unerring eye for composition. Through Nov. 26. (Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370.)

KEN SCHLES
Schles may never again reach the height of gritty vérité he hit with "Invisible City," his hellishly brilliant 1988 photo-essay on the young and the wasted in Alphabet City. But he hasn't lost his ability to get under the skin of urban life, and his new work, made in the course of a project in Holland, finds him on solid ground. His subjects are ordinary citizens seen in passing: waiting for a train, sitting on a bus, peering through a café window. Although occasional eye contact is made, nothing is revealed. So it's hard to account for the vague but persistent sense of yearning, unless the muffled melancholia is the photographer's own. Through Dec. 17. (Schoormans, 508 W. 26th St. 212-243-3159.)

NANCY SPERO
Like Joan Didion's "Year of Magical Thinking," Spero's "Cri du Coeur" is a study in grief following the death of a husband (in Spero's case, the painter Leon Golub, who died in 2004). The painted installation is structured like a frieze, wrapping around the base of the gallery walls. Murky, abstract passages are broken by silhouettes of grieving women, based on female mourners painted inside the tomb of Ramose of Thebes (ca. 1411-1374 B.C.), who look up into empty white space. Disconsolate blues and greens drip like tears; coming from Spero, an exuberant gesturalist, this feels like repressed expressionism, immersion in grief. The work transcends the personal, however, becoming a memorial both for this moment and for the historical multitudes of women who've outlived their men. Through Dec. 3. (Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

Short List

CHRISTINE CALLAHAN: Capsule, 521 W. 26th St. 212-695-1433. Through Nov. 26. **ROLAND FLEXNER:** Golden, 539 W. 23rd St. 212-727-8304. Through Nov. 26. **MIKE KELLEY:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Dec. 17. **DEAN MONOGENIS:** Stux, 530 W. 25th St. 212-352-1600. Through Nov. 26. **DOROTHEA TANNING:** Kent, 541 W. 25th St. 212-627-3680. Through Dec. 3. **"THE PLAIN OF HEAVEN":** 820 Washington St. Open Fridays to Sundays, noon to 6. For more information, call Creative Time, 212-206-6674. Through Nov. 20. **"VII":** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Dec. 23. **"TWIXT TWO WORLDS, OR THE UNINVITED GUEST: A MAGICIAN AT THE SÉANCE":** Burgin, 243 W. 18th St. 212-462-2668. Through Dec. 10.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
A new pas de deux by the principal dancer Albert Evans—made for the recently married Wendy Whelan—will be performed alongside works by Jerome Robbins and the artistic director, Peter Martins, at the company's annual opening-night gala. In Evans's ballet, set to three uncharacteristically lyrical pieces by John Cage, Whelan and her partner, Philip Neal, walk together in a kind of wedding procession, beset by challenges and heartache but also filled with elation. Evans's choreography draws on Whelan's great strength and precision, and also on her artistic maturity, as she does a slow cartwheel over her partner's leg or loops her hands around him in an embrace. The Robbins offering, "N.Y. Export: Opus Jazz," is a streetwise piece made in 1958, the year after "West Side Story," and it celebrates the cool, edgy youth culture of the time. Martins's "Fearful Symmetries" (1990)—set to a driving, minimalist score by the composer John Adams—is a dynamic, fast-paced ensemble piece interspersed with hard-edged pas de deux. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Nov. 22 at 7:30.)

BATSHEVA DANCE COMPANY
The Israeli choreographer Ohad Naharin is known for making electrifying dances, which helps explain why the New York première of his 2003 piece "Mamootot" is already sold out. The nine dancers are dressed like unmasked fencers and surrounded by spectators; the smallish space is lit steadily, like a gymnasium. Moving to kinetic Japanese rock and electronica, the dancers abruptly shift from one texture to another: snaky shoulders, necks jerking backward, a forceful waltz hold. (Mark Morris Dance Center, 3 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 15-18 at 7:30, Nov. 19 at 7:30 and 9:30, Nov. 20 at 3, and Nov. 22 at 7:30. Through Nov. 27.)

BODYVOX
Jamey Hampton and his wife, Ashley Roland, danced with Momix and Pilobus before launching this Portland-based company, and traces of both schools crop up in their latest show, "Civilization Unplugged," receiving its New York première at the Joyce. Thumping music and smartly deployed multimedia complement the nine vignettes, which begin in a dense, mechanistic world and travel back to a simpler time. The choreography shifts between athletic high-energy sections, more fluid passages, and comic bits. Sometimes the jokes go on too long, but there are some truly ingenious sequences, like one in which a man somersaults onto a restaurant table, then yanks his woman up to jitterbug with him. When they jump, the waiter whisks away the tablecloth. Mitchell Rose, a regular Bodyvox collaborator, contributes another crowd-pleasing film, this time a riff on cell phones. (175 Eighth Ave. 212-242-0800. Nov. 15-18 at 8, Nov. 19 at 2 and 8, and Nov. 20 at 2 and 7:30.)

SALLY SILVERS & DANCERS
The brainy downtown choreographer marks her twenty-fifth anniversary with the world première of "Puppy-Skills," a piece for six women that blends fragments of iconic past solos with fresh material. The piece deftly illustrates Silvers's love of physical extremes: a yogalike posture is interrupted by a woman flinging her body into a leap; a sudden stamp of the foot leads into a smooth extension. Later, Carolyn Hall performs the 1989 solo "Flap," channelling the idiosyncracies of Silvers's distinctive movement style: wild, hard-charging, deliberately awkward. Silvers herself performs the new solo "Oven Rack" and, in a nod to her free-improvisation period, joins

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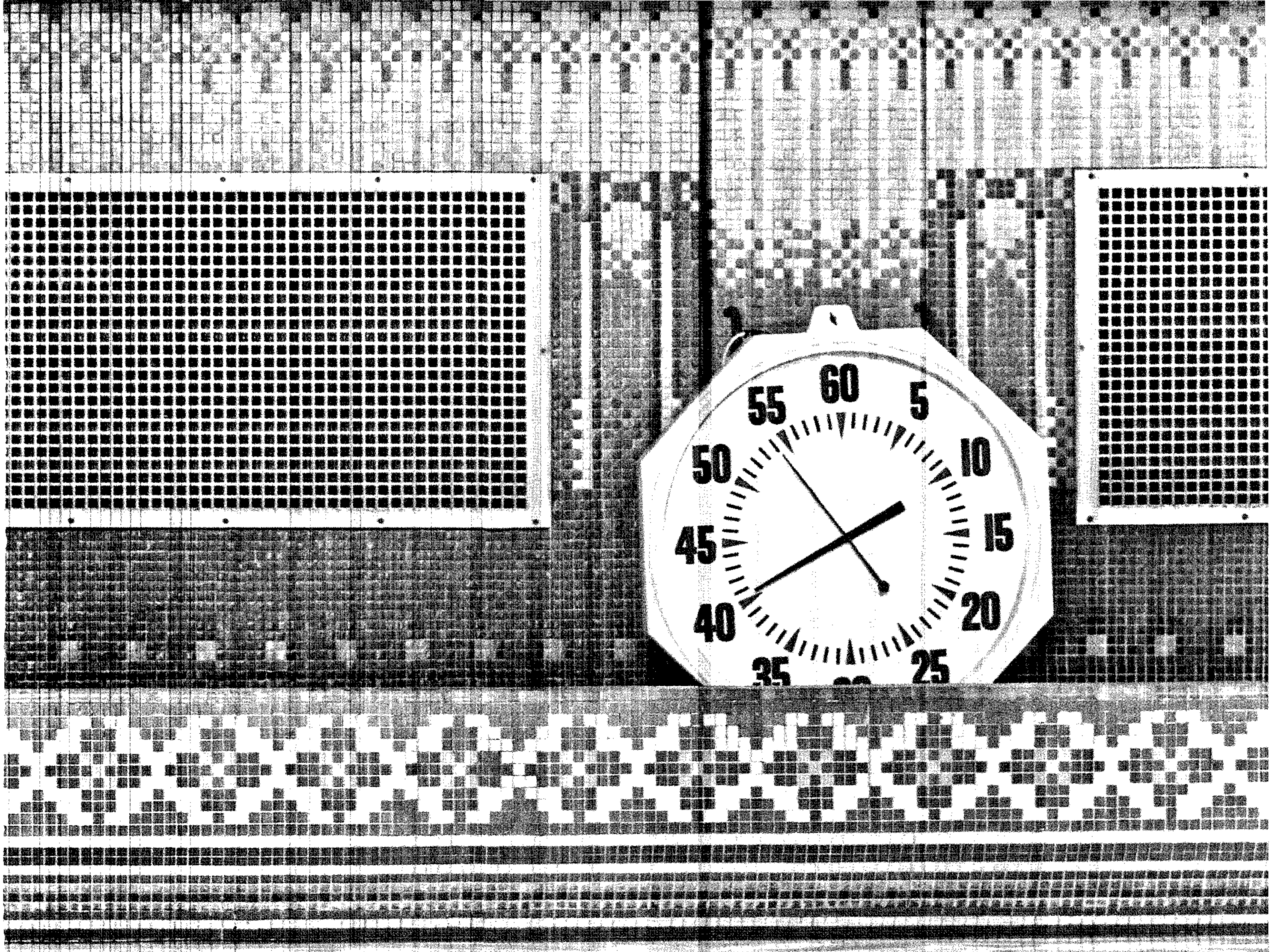

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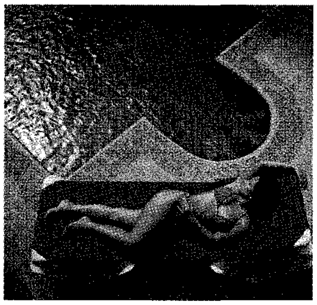

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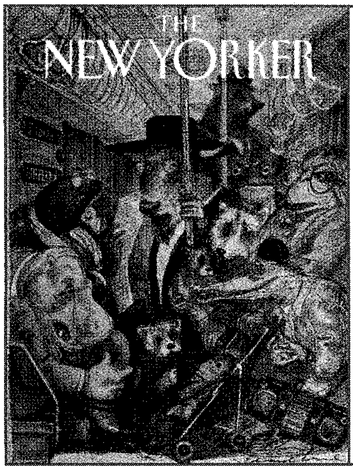

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a nightly improv session with Pooh Kaye, Cydney Wilkes, and a different musician each evening. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave. 212-352-3101. Nov. 17-18 at 8, Nov. 19 at 5 and 8, and Nov. 20 at 5.)

JOHANNES WIELAND
In recent years, the German-born choreographer has made a name for himself with dances at once austere and sensuous. His new work "Artificial" is in the same mode—full of incident, with theatrical costumes and an abrasive electronic score. So, less obviously, are "Reverse" and "Sediment," both set to Bach. "Coma," a work in progress, augurs a promising new twist. The glamour remains, but with a smirk, and the usual lack of affect tips over into deadpan. (Citigroup Theatre, 405 W. 55th St. 347-329-5526. Nov. 17-19 at 8.)

CREACH/COMPANY
The personalities and movement styles of the dancers in Terry Creach's all-male company serve as inspiration for his new quartet, "A Likeness." Group encounters alternate with solos in which the dancers share diary entries, talking their way into inadvertent confessions. Video by Sue Rees extends the character studies: a performer stops in his tracks, but his image, projected on his body in various states of undress, keeps dancing. "Untitled" is a similar investigation of (and is performed by) four non-dancer visual artists. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Nov. 17-20 at 8.)

GOLDEN DRAGON ACROBATS
The troupe from He Nan, China, specializes in two types of precarious acts: alarming stunts (gymnast balancing on chair atop ladder) and ultimate rainy-day projects (contortionist supporting a hundred water glasses on hands, feet, and face). The bejewelled women have expressive, curling fingers and extraordinary muscle control; the men twirl long sticks and scamper up poles. The dead-on bicycle tricks, opulent lion costumes, and synchronized juggling acrobats may be hokey, but they still induce gasps. (New Victory Theatre, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 18 at 7, Nov. 19 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 20 at 12 and 5. Through Jan. 1.)

LA TROUPE MAKANDAL
This Brooklyn-based troupe, founded in Haiti more than thirty years ago, is in the serious business of preserving the drumming and dancing of Haitian vodou rituals, but its presentations have a loose, festive charm. The program "Rising Sun" uses a little pantomime and lot of percussion and hip rolling to tell of the season of the dead and the birth of cosmic twins. With the internationally beloved Emeline Michel as guest vocalist. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Nov. 18 at 8.)

JANE GOLDBERG
The former Tap Goddess of the Lower East Side does her topical tapping in Chelsea this week. In her new show, "Belly Tap for World Peace," she once more applies her mix of wry observation and neat footwork to the issues of the moment. (Blue Mountain Gallery, 530 W. 25th St. 212-393-1182. Nov. 18-20 at 8.)

"CLASSICAL SAVION"
In January, the master hoofer Savion Glover joined a chamber orchestra and applied his improvisational brilliance to a program of Vivaldi, Bach, Bartók, and Piazzolla. Now he brings the show to his home town. (New Jersey Performing Arts Center, 1 Center St., Newark. 888-466-5722. Nov. 18 at 8.)

RENNIE HARRIS
The man who gave meaning to the term "hip-hop choreographer" turns from his deep, major-themed ensemble works of late to a deep, autobiographical solo for himself, "PrinceScareKrow's Road to the Emerald City." Middle-aged and still an extraordinary mover, Harris shows what can happen when a young man's art grows up. (Aaron Davis Hall, W. 135 St. at Convent Ave. 212-650-7100. Nov. 19 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
Nov. 16 at 8: This season's revival of the Jonathan Miller production of **"Le Nozze di Figaro,"** efferves-

cently staged by Robin Guarino, is perhaps the best yet, with a cast that mixes sure and seasoned professionals (such as Hei-Kyung Hong, a poignant Countess) with excellent younger artists (especially the débuting Joyce DiDonato, who offers a vigorous but surprisingly subtle Cherubino). Lisa Milne, Wendy White, Luca Pisaroni, and the scene-stealing Peter Mattei (a ravenously lusty Count) round out the cast; Mark Wigglesworth's reserved conducting lets the drama emerge with affecting clarity. ♦ Nov. 19 at 1:30: With Sandra Piques Eddy replacing DiDonato. ♦ Nov. 17 and Nov. 21 at 8: Ramón Vargas and Natalie Dessay, the comeback kid of coloratura, perform the title roles of Gounod's **"Roméo et Juliette,"** in a new production by Guy Joosten which also features the young baritone Stéphane Degout; Bertrand de Billy. ♦ Nov. 18 and Nov. 22 at 8: **"La Bohème,"** with Ruth Ann Swenson and Frank Lopardo as Mimì and Rodolfo, and Emily Pulley and Vassily Gerello as Musetta and Marcello; Philippe Auguin. ♦ Nov. 19 at 8: Bizet's **"Carmen"** returns to the repertory, with a superb young conductor (Philippe Jordan) and a Micaëla making her début (Ana Maria Martinez); the redoubtable Denyce Graves and Marcello Giordani are Carmen and Don José. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

Nov. 16 at 7:30 and Nov. 19 at 8: City Opera's production of **"Turandot"** manages to provide abundant spectacle without a lot of expensive clutter. Lori Phillips (a notable dramatic soprano) and Philip Webb are Turandot and Calaf; George Manahan conducts. ♦ Nov. 17 at 7:30, Nov. 18 at 8, and Nov. 19-20 at 1:30: Rachel Portman, the Oscar-winning composer of lush scores for "Emma" and other films, has written an operatic setting of Saint-Exupéry's **"The Little Prince,"** and City Opera is hosting the New York première; the production is by the formidable Francesca Zambello, with sets and costumes by the late, great Maria Bjørnson; Gerald Steichen. (New York State Theatre. 212-721-6500. These are the final performances of the fall season.)

"SHELTER"

The Bang on a Can composers Julia Wolfe, Michael Gordon, and David Lang—who, in the tradition of Reich and Glass, are becoming BAM's unofficial composers-in-residence—present their latest group composition, an expression of the conflict between the human desire for safety and the inevitability of natural disaster. Along with some new collaborators—the vocal group Trio Mediaeval and the German ensemble MusikFabrik—the composers' talented old friends are also on board: the librettist Deborah Artman, the filmmaker Bill Morrison, and the director Bob McGrath. (BAM Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Nov. 16-19 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK GRAND OPERA: "GIOVANNA D'ARCO"

No conductor in New York has a more natural command of Italian style than Vincent La Selva, who has conducted every single one of Verdi's operas. This one, based on Schiller's extremely free treatment of the story of Joan of Arc, is a swift and daring entertainment that no true Verdian would miss. Maria Knapik takes the title role, in a concert performance at Carnegie Hall. (212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 8.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER: "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

Benjamin Britten was always blessed with superb librettists, but in this opera he went straight to the source and set a cut-down text of the Shakespeare play—which, when vocalized, makes this strange sexual comedy seem even more twisted than it actually is. David Atherton, one of London's most experienced opera conductors, leads the student orchestra and cast. (Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 212-769-7406. Nov. 16 and Nov. 18 at 8 and Nov. 20 at 2.)

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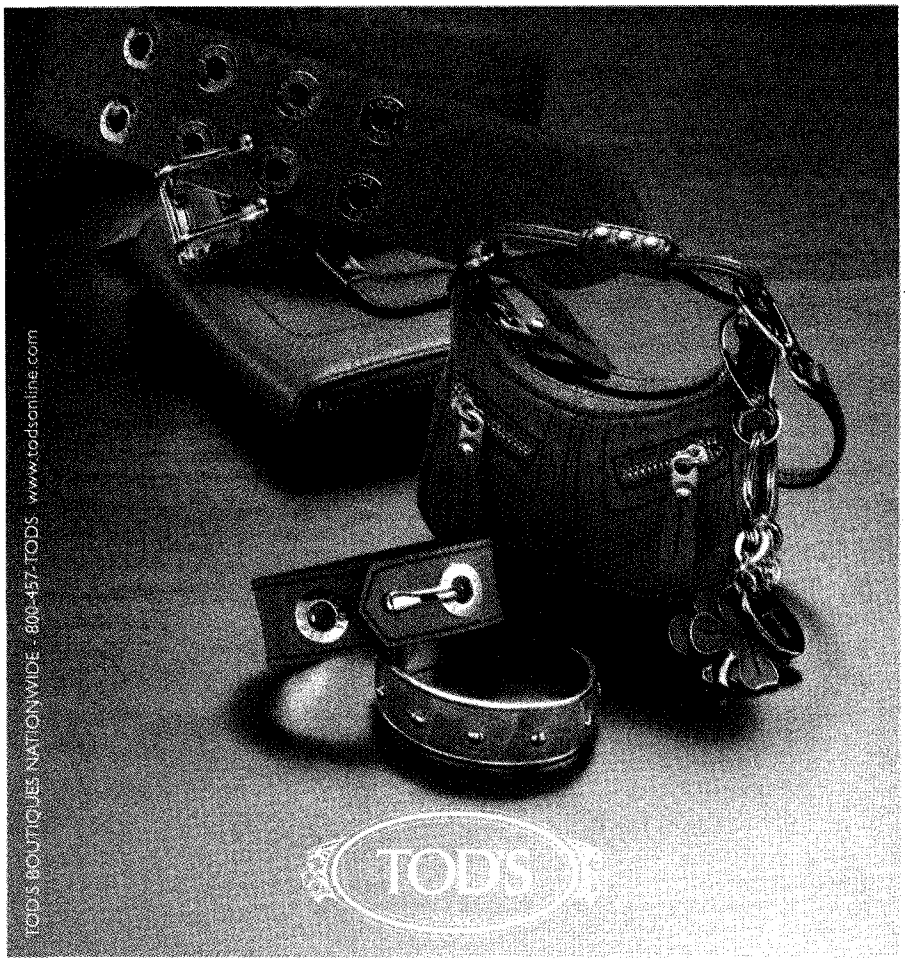
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sical modernists, Witold Lutosławski: "Musique Funèbre," the violin concerto "Chain 2" (with Mira Wang), and the First and Third Symphonies. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. Nov. 18 at 8.)

PIFFARO AND THE CHOIR OF THE CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA: "FESTIVE VESPERS"
Kent Tritle leads the renowned Renaissance band and his choir in an evening evoking the music and worship of Dresden circa 1620, featuring works by Praetorious, Schütz, and Scheidt. (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Nov. 18 at 8.)

SAINT LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
The American conductor David Robertson, long renowned for the scientific precision of his style, is determined to show some range this year, bringing his orchestra to Carnegie Hall for a series that explores the links between music, language, and the visual arts. Nov. 18 at 8: "Seeing Debussy, Hearing Monet" includes projections of Monet's paintings, performances of Debussy's "Jeux" and "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun," and a discussion of their works. ♦ Nov. 19 at 8: Michelle DeYoung and Stuart Skelton are the vocal soloists in a concert that includes Mozart's "Magic Flute" Overture, Feldman's "Coptic Light" (a work inspired by the patterns of African textiles), and Mahler's "Das Lied von der Erde." (212-247-7800.)

PAULA ROBISON: "THE GREAT VIVALDI"
The flutist begins her third season of concerts, with chamber orchestra, devoted to concertos by the Venetian master. (Temple of Dendur, Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 19 at 7.)

RECITALS

SOHEIL NASSERI
The intense but elegant young pianist, equally at home in music new and old, continues his Beethoven season with a program that includes the "Les Adieux" Sonata and the Sonata No. 27 in E Minor. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 8.)

MARIE-CLAIRE ALAIN
The doyenne of French organists comes to the Church of the Holy Trinity to perform music by Bach, Franck, and Campion, along with works by two other noted members of *la famille* Alain—her father, Albert, and her brother, Jehan. (316 E. 88th St. Nov. 17 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

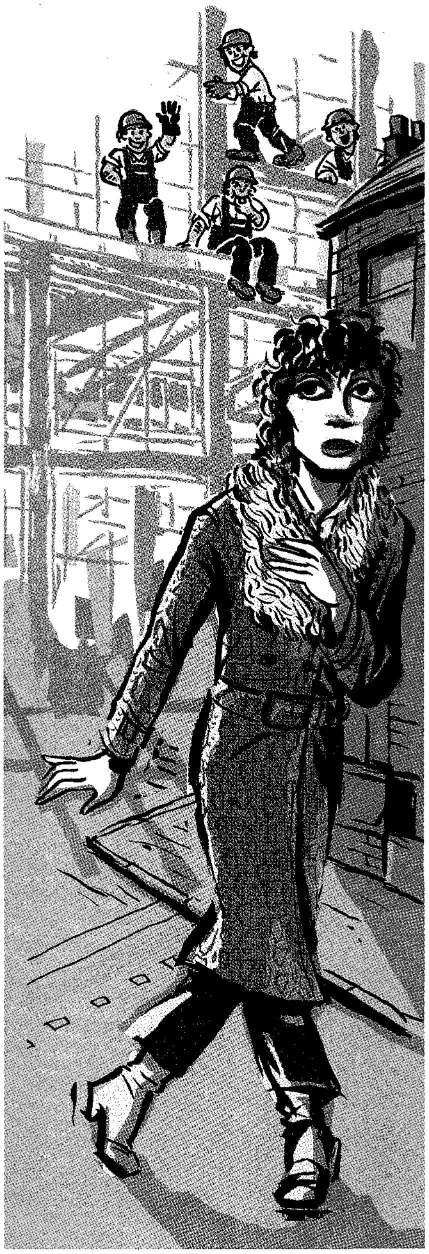
HILARY HAHN
Hahn, the most impeccable technician among today's younger violinists, performs sonatas by Ysaÿe, Enescu, Mozart, and Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 12, No. 3) with her accompanist, Natalie Zhu. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 17 at 8.)

JORY VINIKOUR
Harold Meltzer's music is boldly communicative but gently made. The New York première of "Toccatas" is featured in a concert by Vinikour, a young harpsichord virtuoso based in Paris, who will also perform works by Scarlatti and Byrd. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. Nov. 17 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

ANTTI SIIRLA
In the latest of the Metropolitan Museum's new series of "Piano Forte" recitals, the young pianist (a winner of the Leeds Competition) offers a clutch of Beethoven sonatas (including "Les Adieux"). (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 18 at 8.)

MILLER THEATRE: 20TH CENTURY CLASSICS ENSEMBLE
A group featuring the pianist Jeremy Denk, the violinist Mark Steinberg, and the conductor Reinbert de Leeuw offers works by Berg (the Chamber Concerto), Mozart (the Serenade in C Minor, K. 388), and Messiaen. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Nov. 18 at 8.)

BENJAMIN SOSLAND AND AUDREY AXINN
The Morris-Jumel Mansion, Manhattan's oldest house, lies at the end of a secluded cobblestone street off St. Nicholas Avenue. The young tenor and fortepianist offer a performance there of the first Romantic song cycle, Beethoven's "An die Ferne Geliebte." (65 Jumel Terrace, between 160th and 162nd Sts. 212-923-8008. Nov. 19 at 3.)



"Breakfast on Pluto," directed by Neil Jordan, opens on Nov. 16.

BARGEMUSIC
A recital by the violinist Judith Ingolfsson and the pianist Vladimir Stoupel highlights a new week at the floating chamber-music series; they perform works by Schubert, Bach, Schumann, and Joan Tower. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Nov. 19 at 7:30 and Nov. 20 at 4.)

AN DIE MUSIK
The versatile ensemble, with help from the violinist Colin Jacobsen and the cellist Edward Arron, offers music by Pärt, Boccherini, and Mozart (the Oboe Quartet and the Piano Quartet in E-Flat Major). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 20 at 4.)

"MUSIC BEFORE 1800" SERIES: REBEL
Louise Basbas usually has to import the kind of world-class early-music talent that graces her fine series, but this group is based firmly in New York. They perform concertos and sonatas for recorder and strings by Vivaldi, at Corpus Christi Church. (529 W. 121st St. 212-666-9266. Nov. 20 at 4.)

ANGELIKA KIRCHSCHLAGER
The glamorous mezzo-soprano, accompanied by Warren Jones, sings songs by Brahms, Grieg, Poulenc ("Banalités"), and Liszt. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 20 at 5.)

MOVIES OPENING

ARISTIDE AND THE ENDLESS REVOLUTION
Nicolas Rossier directed this documentary, about Haiti's deposed President, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the turmoil resulting from his ouster. Opening Nov. 17. (Pioneer Theatre.)

BLACKMAIL BOY
Comedy and chaos transpire as the matriarch of a Greek family recovers from a terrible accident. Written and directed by Michalis Reppas and Thanassis Papathanasiou. In Greek. Opening Nov. 18. (Quad Cinema.)

BREAKFAST ON PLUTO
Neil Jordan's second adaptation of a novel by Patrick McCabe, a comic drama starring Cillian Murphy as a young man who leaves a small Irish town to become a transvestite prostitute in London. Opening Nov. 16. (In wide release.)

GILLES' WIFE
A housewife living in a French mining town in the nineteen-thirties launches a desperate battle to save her marriage when she begins to suspect her husband of infidelity. Opening Nov. 16. Directed by Frédéric Fonteyne. In French. (IFC Center.)

HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE
Harry competes in the Triwizard Tournament. Directed by Mike Newell. Opening Nov. 18. (In wide release.)

PRIVATE
A Palestinian family refuses to move when Israeli troops occupy their home. Directed by Saverio Costanzo. In Arabic, Hebrew, and English. Opening Nov. 18. (Angelika.)

THE SYRIAN BRIDE
A comic drama from Israel, about a Druze woman from the Golan Heights (Clara Khoury) who is about to wed a Syrian man, which will make it impossible for her to return to her Israeli home. With Hiam Abbass as her sister. Directed by Eran Riklis. In English, Hebrew, and Arabic. Opening Nov. 16. (Film Forum.)

UNVEILED
An Iranian woman who is persecuted for being a lesbian flees to Germany and assumes the identity of a man. Starring Jasmin Tabatabai and Anneke Kim Sarnau ("The Constant Gardener"). Directed by Angelina Maccarone. In German, Farsi, and English. Opening Nov. 18. (Cinema Village.)

WALK THE LINE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 18. (In wide release.)

ŽIŽEK!
Astra Taylor directed this profile of the globe-trotting Slovenian cultural theorist and former Presidential candidate Slavoj Žižek. In English and Slovenian. Opening Nov. 18. (IFC Center.)

NOW PLAYING

APART FROM YOU
A geisha, Kikué (Mitsuko Yoshikawa), is getting older, and her clients are losing interest. Her teenage son, Yoshio (Akio Isono), has become ashamed of her profession and is cutting school to run with a gang. She beseeches a younger colleague, Terugiku (Sumiko Mizukubo), to set him straight. The director, Mikio Naruse, filmed this intimate silent melodrama from 1933 with an exhilarating density of emotional information: his richly textured images have the specificity of a novelist's burnished prose. Though Naruse ruefully satirizes the subordination of women in Japan, his main interest is the intense, contradictory poignancy of human relations: as Kikué joylessly raises a sake glass with a client, her agonies are condensed into a heartbeat when the liquid casts its wavering reflections onto her face.—*Richard Brody* (Film Forum; Nov. 16.)

BEE SEASON
Young Eliza Naumann (Flora Cross) is a champion speller. This is a source of warm satisfaction to her father (Richard Gere), who not only thrums with ambition for his children but also, as a Kabbalistic scholar,

PAUL HOPPE

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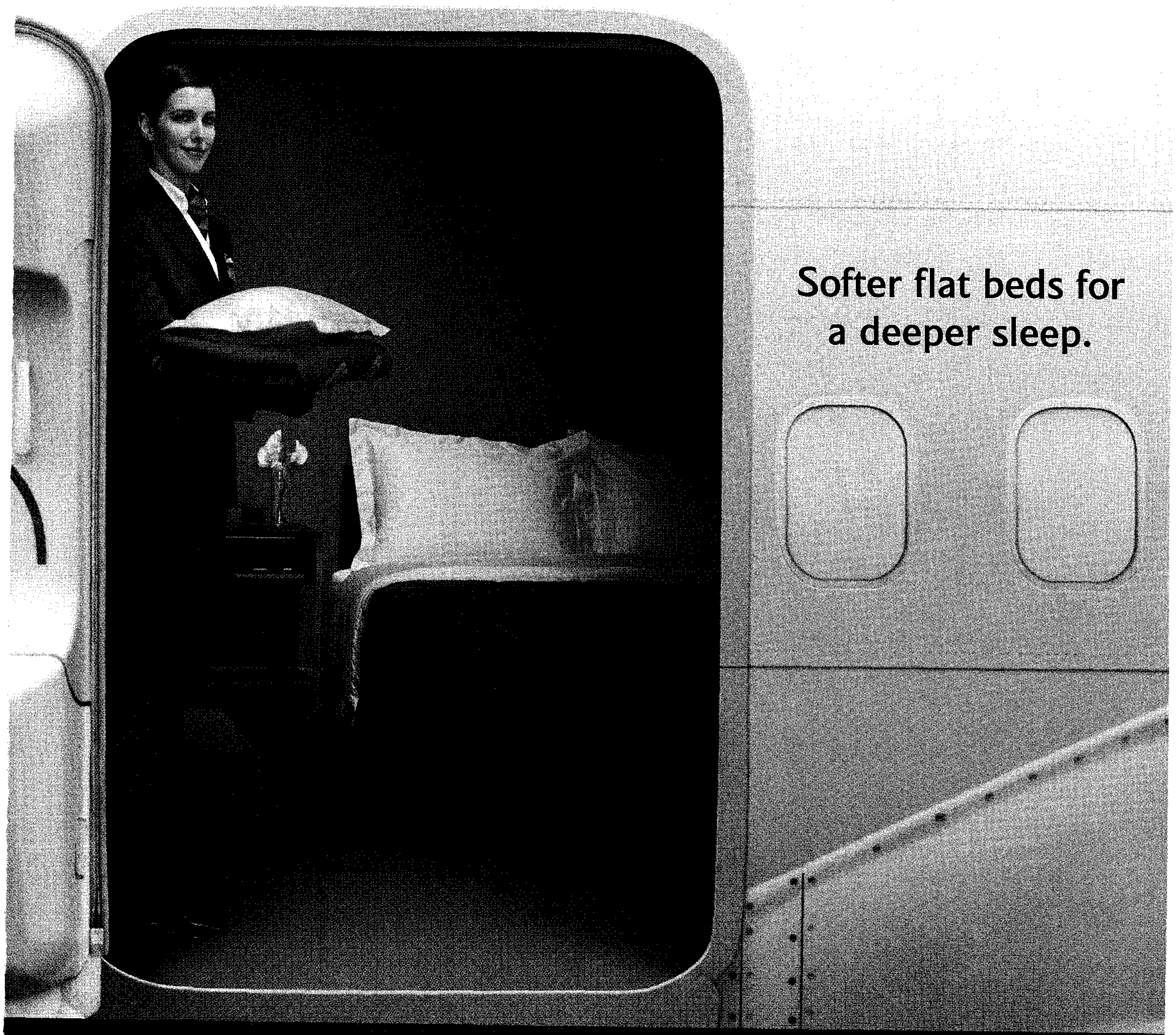

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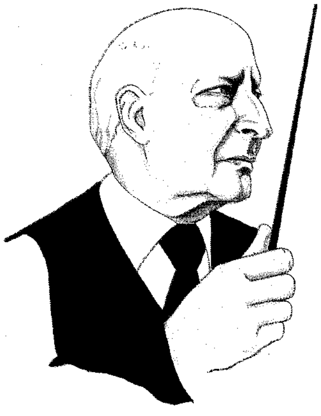
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
EVERYTHING AT ONCE

Once a season comes the Night of Too Many Concerts, when several can't-miss programs happen simultaneously. This fall it's Nov. 18. At Miller Theatre, the intense conductor Reinbert de Leeuw presents Alban Berg's Chamber Concerto, a work whose cryptic references to the overbearing personality of Arnold Schoenberg, Berg's teacher, are still being decoded.



At Carnegie Hall, David Robertson, the new music director of the St. Louis Symphony, applies his considerable communicative talents to a discussion of Debussy's relationship to the visual arts, with performances of "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun" and "Jeux." And, at Avery Fisher Hall, Leon Botstein conducts the American Symphony in a too rare performance of Witold Lutosławski's Third Symphony, which has the shape of a mountain climb: it begins in thickets of semi-aleatory activity and ends with one of the grandest sonic vistas in the orchestral literature. Memo to orchestras: play this modern masterpiece more often.
—*Alex Ross*

asserts that words can grant access to the divine—a theory that is less likely to be embraced by anybody listening to the script of this movie. Flora has a brother (Max Minghella) who is shopping around for religious experience, and a mother (Juliette Binoche) whose kleptomaniac leanings point to a calamity in her past. All in all, a happy California family, and if you expect to get a laugh, or even a fleeting smile, out of their wide range of dysfunctions, think again. Every tremor is treated with a frowning solemnity, and only the haunted performances of the two younger actors keep the movie alive. The spelling bees in which Flora competes are drained of all drama by the floating, phantasmagoric style that is favored by the directors, Scott McGehee and David Siegel. Previously, they enjoyed some success with "The Deep End." This time, regrettably, they have moved to the other end of the pool.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/14/05.) (In wide release.)

CAPOTE
How could Truman Capote, with his high, thin, goose-quill voice and his floating palms, possibly have gained the trust of the straightforward men and women of Holcomb, Kansas, when he went there for this magazine in 1959 to investigate the pointless slaughter of four members of the Clutter family—the murders that became the subject of Capote's masterpiece, "In Cold Blood"? The writer Dan Futterman and the director Bennett Miller tell us how, and the wonderful Philip Seymour Hoffman first captures Capote physically and then works inward to the vulnerable yet rotting soul. When Capote gets a look at one of the murderers, Perry Smith (Clifton Collins, Jr.), the focus of the movie becomes the intimate, artistically necessary but morally questionable relation between artist and felon. With Catherine Keener as the novelist Harper Lee; Mark Pellegrino as Perry's partner, Dick Hickock; and Bob Balaban as the *New Yorker* editor William Shawn, who is pictured, bizarrely, as hungry for the bloody details of the crime.—*David Denby* (10/10/05) (In wide release.)

CHICKEN LITTLE
Disney's attempt to compete with Pixar at computer animation falls a bit flat. The barnyard fable, about a nerdy, alarmist chick (voiced by Zach Braff), is given an updated, almost Spielberg-like spin involving flying saucers and single-parent issues. The film relies on an abundance of pop-culture references and a busy, imaginative design, but only the voice talent raises it above the mediocre. With the King of the Littles, Steve Zahn ("Stuart Little," "Dr. Dolittle 2"), as a large, Streisand-loving piglet named Runt and the always welcome Joan Cusack as Abby Mallard, the duck with a crush.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE DYING GAUL
For most of its running time, Craig Lucas's adaptation of his 1998 Off-Broadway hit is an intriguing study of love and betrayal. The story of a grieving screenwriter (Peter Sarsgaard) and the married studio executive (Campbell Scott) with whom he has an affair while rewriting his screenplay develops into an uncomfortable, sexy secrets-and-lies triangle. But once Sarsgaard's character finds out that his lover's wife (Patricia Clarkson) knows of the affair, the film takes a tragic detour so thoroughly unconvincing that it betrays the rich and complex situations that have preceded it. Still, Clarkson and Scott turn in beautifully modulated performances, and Sarsgaard, up until his baffling character change, is moving and intensely sympathetic. Lucas's bold, theatrical direction suits his material; the dramatic, high-strung dialogue pings around the large spaces like balls in a pinball machine. It's a compelling failure. —*B.D.* (In wide release.)

GOOD NIGHT, AND GOOD LUCK
George Clooney's nifty account of Edward R. Murrow's historic prime-time assaults on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, in 1954, imitates many of Murrow's best qualities—it's swift, elegant, grimly humorous, and effective. David Strathairn gets the suavely streamlined Murrow perfectly—the pomaded jet-black hair, the thick brows and unblinking eyes, the curt, rhyming syntax and firm emphasis. Clooney's most serious intention appears to be to deliver a blow to the patella of a somnolent American press that, until recently, has indulged the Bush Administration's most extravagant smears and lies. He has completely succeeded. With Clooney himself as Murrow's partner, Fred Friendly, and Frank Langella as the CBS chairman William S. Paley. Robert Elswit did the black-and-white cinematography, which matches kinescopes of McCarthy's actual speeches.—*D.D.* (10/10/05) (In wide release.)

JARHEAD
An ambiguous and unsatisfying celebration of a barbarian warrior caste. Initially, the director, Sam Mendes, and the writer, William Broyles, Jr., adapting Anthony Swofford's 2003 memoir about the Marines in the first Gulf War, seem to have made the latest version of a traditional American narrative: a young man enters the military, undergoes bewildering ordeals, ships off to war, and finds out who he is. The hero, Swofford himself (Jake Gyllenhaal), gets pounded by officers, first by a drill instructor and then by the sergeant (Jamie Foxx) who heads his special Marine unit, and hazed by his buddies. Muscled and primed, the Marines arrive in Saudi Arabia in the fall of 1990—and wait in the desert. As the coalition forces slowly build up, the men train, horse around, and think obsessively about their girlfriends at home. But they never do get into the war, except peripherally, and, since the question of courage and character is left up in the air, we wonder, in the end, why the material wasn't played more ironically, or for laughs. Mendes and the cinematographer, Roger Deakins, produce some astonishing scenes—soldiers seemingly turning into sand crabs, oil fires at night—but without the test of combat the men come off as infantile and self-pitying. With Peter Sarsgaard.—*D.D.* (11/7/05) (In wide release.)

KISS KISS, BANG BANG
Robert Downey, Jr., plays Harry Lockhart, a New York thief who stumbles into a movie audition and winds up in L.A., where the preparation for his screen test is aided by a private detective known as Gay Perry (Val Kilmer). For good measure, Harry bumps into an old friend, Harmony (Michelle Monaghan), from his Indiana days. At this point, needless to say, real bodies start to accrue, and real—if comically untroubling—crimes demand to be solved. The writer and director, Shane Black, wants both to reanimate and to mock the devices of pulp, from Raymond Chandler downward; such knowingness occupies him so intensely that, by the end, he is falling over himself trying to tie up the threads of plot, none of which mattered in the first place. The result should be painful to behold, yet somehow it comes off; all three leads, especially Downey, get high on the fizz of the project, and the fussy, needful patter between him and Kilmer feels like it could rattle on forever.—*A.L.* (10/31/05) (In wide release.)

PRIDE & PREJUDICE
Yet another Jane Austen adaptation. She must have one hell of an agent. On this occasion, Lizzie Bennet is played by Keira Knightley, who maintains the steady rate of corseted gasps that she began in "Pirates of the Caribbean"; Mr. Bennet, by Donald Sutherland, who looks richly amused, as he should, and slightly bewildered, as maybe he shouldn't; and Lizzie's older sister, the trusting Jane, by Rosamund Pike. Every reader of the book has a jealous, private notion of what Mr. Darcy should look like, and many women viewers have already testified that the latest incarnation, Matthew Macfadyen, fits the bill. Why, however, is he perennially downcast? Is he saddened by his own reputation for sternness, or has he just seen the gardening bills for his country estate? The screenwriter, Deborah Moggach, whips the tale along at a gallop, yet at times it slows beneath an unwelcome weight of mood. The director, Joe Wright, has a taste for guttering darkness and lashing rain, which suggests that he won't rest easy until he gets his hands on "Wuthering Heights." With Brenda Blethyn as the mother hen of the Bennet brood and Tom Hollander as the tiny yet preposterous Mr. Collins.—*A.L.* (11/14/05) (In wide release.)

PRIME
Meryl Streep gives one of her wittiest performances in Ben Younger's comedy about a middle-aged Jewish hausfrau-therapist from the Upper West Side who discovers that a longtime patient, a thirty-seven-year-old divorcée (Uma Thurman), is dating her handsome twenty-three-year-old son (Bryan Greenberg). Streep fidgets and rotates her neck and rolls her eyes—it's the broadest work she's ever done. The

LARA TOMLIN

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movie, which shifts from comedy to bittersweet ruefulness, is a little on the tepid side, but it plays easily enough, and Thurman, long and slinky, with golden skin, is irresistible as a woman in love.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SHOPGIRL
Standing behind a glove counter at Saks in Los Angeles, Claire Danes has an expectant but unfocussed air about her—she's like an enigmatic figure in a painted portrait. In this adaptation of Steve Martin's novella from 2000, the director Anand Tucker lovingly photographs the angular, big-boned Danes in a variety of graceful poses, dressed and undressed. Danes is an appealing woman, but moviegoers may find themselves baffled as to why she must choose between the ferrety Jason Schwartzman and Martin himself, in an inert performance as an aging Lothario who can't give her the love that she needs. The movie offers high-style sets and elegantly blended colors to frame what turns out to be an underwritten and under-dramatized story. Written by Martin.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

SONS OF THE DESERT
Burly Oliver Hardy may pretend he's the cock of the walk, but he's just as henpecked as Stan Laurel in this inspired runaway-husbands farce from 1933. A helpful vet posing as a doc prescribes a trip to Honolulu as a cover for the pair to travel from L.A. to Chicago for the annual convention of their fraternal organization. Laurel in this movie is the slapstick laureate of passive aggression. His somnolent squiggle of a walk and his dazed-newborn expressions convey his instinct for getting what he wants while yielding to every personality louder or more potent than he is, such as his wife—who in this beautifully high-pitched setup is a rifle-toting duck hunter. Domestic wheedling has never been funnier or more pathetic than when enacted by Hardy, who displays his mastery not just of the slow burn but of the flareup and the blaze, too. If William A. Seiter's direction is static, the effect is like seeing a series of tableaux tickled to pieces.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; Nov. 16, Nov. 19, and Nov. 20.)

THE SQUID AND THE WHALE
The time is 1986, in Brooklyn's idyllic Park Slope, and a family is breaking up. The dad, Bernard (Jeff Daniels), a college literature teacher and an increasingly unsuccessful novelist, has become a sour and selfish liar; the mom, Joan (Laura Linney), can't stop leaving evidence of her love affairs around the house. Trying to hold on to their love for their parents, their two boys fall into increasingly nutty imitative behavior. Walt (Jesse Eisenberg), sixteen, parrots every one of his dad's huffy opinions; Frank (Owen Kline), a twelve-year-old in a sexual uproar, imitates his mom's indiscretions by rubbing his crotch against library shelves and leaving deposits on schoolbooks and lockers. The movie is a satirical comedy—ruthless and heartbreaking—but a comedy nonetheless; the writer-director Noah Baumbach has captured the way educated parents project their self-love and their career anxieties onto bright children, and the way kids respond to the currents of parental misconduct like pilot fish shimmying around a wayward shark. Baumbach's touch is light, sure, devastating. With Anna Paquin as a creative-writing-student hustler and William Baldwin as a sexually available tennis pro.—*D.D.* (10/24/05) (In wide release.)

WAL-MART: THE HIGH COST OF LOW PRICE
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Village East Cinemas.)

THE WEATHER MAN
Chicago midwinter melancholia, rendered in shades of blue and gray. The ice on the lake cracks and shifts, the freezing rain comes down like acid, and David Spritz (Nicolas Cage), the fatuously likable weatherman for a local TV station, gestures in front of a blank screen. Dave can't get the weather right—it's all shifting winds, he says in despair. His life is all shifting winds, too. A forty-year-old child, he feels abashed every time he comes into contact with his father, Robert Spritzel (Michael Caine), a well-known writer whose self-assurance is crushing; Dave's wife (Hope Davis) is leaving him; and his kids are running into trouble. The tone is depressive—even the jokes have a sorry air about them. But the director, Gore Verbinski, and the writer, Steven Conrad, stuck to their conception that the material should play as a belated coming-of-age movie, and the movie has some grit. In all, it's one of those doomed projects that inspire respect.—*D.D.* (11/7/05) (In wide release.)

Also Playing

BALLETS RUSSES: Film Forum. **A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE:** In wide release. **IN HER SHOES:** In wide release (10/17/05). **NORTH COUNTRY:** In wide release (10/31/05). **THE PASSENGER:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema. **WALLACE & GROMIT: THE CURSE OF THE WERE-RABBIT:** In wide release (10/17/05).

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Performa05." Nov. 16 at 7:30: Films by and about Bas Jan Ader. ♦ Theatrical première. Nov. 16 at 9:30: "Shooting Magpies" (2005, Amber Collective). ♦ "The Onion Presents." Nov. 17 at 8: "Babe: Pig in the City" (1998, George Miller). ♦ Theatrical première. Nov. 18-22 at 7: "Faith 2002/03," short films by Virginie Marchand. ♦ Through Nov. 27: "The Films of Chantal Akerman." All films are in French. Nov. 18 at 9: "D'Est" (1993). ♦ Nov. 19 at 3: "Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles" (1975). ♦ Nov. 20 at 9: "Night and Day" (1991). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Nov. 20 at 5:15: "Enthusiasm" (1931, Dziga Vertov).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Gena Rowlands: An Independent Spirit." Nov. 17 at 7:30: "Unhook the Stars" (1996, Nick Cassavetes). ♦ Nov. 18 at 3, 6, and 9: "Tempest" (1982, Paul Mazursky). ♦ Nov. 19 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Another Woman" (1998, Woody Allen). ♦ Nov. 20 at 3, 6, and 9: "Love Streams" (1984, John Cassavetes). ♦ "A Moving Camera: Kenji Mizoguchi." All films are in Japanese. Nov. 21 at 6 and 9: "The Story of the Last Chrysanthemums" (1939). ♦ Nov. 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Street of Shame" (1956).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—"Naruse: The Unknown Japanese Master," the films of Mikio Naruse. All films are in Japanese, except where noted. Nov. 16 at 1 and 5:10: "Tsuruhachi and Tsurujiro" (1938). Nov. 16 at 2:50: "The Whole Family Works" (1939). ♦ Nov. 16 at 7 and 10: "Travelling Actors" (1940). ♦ Nov. 16 at 8:30: "Apart from You" (†). ♦ Nov. 17 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Scattered Clouds" (1967). ♦ In revival. Nov. 18-22 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "Classe Tous Risques" (1960, Claude Sautet; in French).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Cinéma Tuesdays." Nov. 22 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Camille Claudel" (1988, Bruno Nuytten; in French).

IFC CENTER
323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Movie Night with Slavoj Žižek." Nov. 16 at 7:30: "Dead of Night" (1945, Alberto Cavalcanti, Basil Dearden, Charles Crichton, and Robert Hamer), presented by the philosopher Slavoj Žižek. "Weekend Classics." ♦ Nov. 18-20 at noon: "The Woman Next Door" (1981, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Nov. 18-19, "The Apple" (1980, Menahem Golan; in English, French, German, and Italian).

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 East 47th St. (212-752-3015)—Through Dec. 11: "Hiroshi Sugimoto Film Series: The Moving Image of Modern Art." All films are in Japanese. Nov. 19 at 2 and Nov. 20 at 4:20: "Blind Beast" (1969, Yasuzo Masumura). ♦ Nov. 19 at 3:45: "Tokyo Drifter" (1966, Seijun Suzuki). ♦ Nov. 20 at 2: "The Face of Another" (1966, Hiroshi Teshigahara).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Nov. 23: The films of Isabelle Huppert. All films are in French, except where noted. Nov. 16 at 6: "Passion" (1982, Jean-Luc Godard). ♦ Nov. 17 at 6: "8 Women" (2002, François Ozon). ♦ Nov. 17 at 8:15: "Story of Women" (1988, Claude Chabrol). ♦ Nov. 18 at 5:15: "The Swindle" (1997, Chabrol). ♦ Nov. 20 at 5: "The Flood" (1994, Igor Minayev; in Russian with French subtitles). ♦ "On Set with French Cinema: An Evening with Arnaud Desplechin." Nov. 16 at 7:45: "La Sentinelle" (1992, Arnaud Desplechin; in French), introduced by the director. ♦ "Early Autumn: Masterworks of Japanese Cinema from the National Film Center, Tokyo." All films are in Japanese. Nov. 16 at 8:30: "Ino and Mon" (1936, Sotoji Kimura). ♦ Nov. 17 at 8:30: "Attack of the Mushroom People" (1963, Ishiro Honda). ♦ Nov. 19 at 6:30: "I Hate But Love" (1962, Koreyoshi Kurahara). ♦ Nov. 20 at 2: "Band of Assassins" (1962, Satsuo Yamamoto). ♦ "Winsor McCay Animation Program." Nov. 17 at 6:30: John Canemaker, Winsor McCay's biographer, presents a screening of four animated films by McCay (1911-18; silent). ♦ "Stalking the Image: The Films of Margaret Tait." Nov. 18 at 6:45 and Nov. 19 at 2: "Program One: Film Poems," short films by Margaret Tait (1951-74). ♦ Nov. 18 at 8 and Nov. 19 at 3:45: "Program Two: Islands," short films by Tait (1955-1998). ♦ Through Nov. 30: "Poetry and Rigor: The Films of Gianni Amelio." All films are in Italian. Nov. 18 at 7:30: "Stolen Children" (1992), introduced by Gianni Amelio. ♦ Nov. 19 at 2: "Open Doors" (1990). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4:15: "Lamerica" (1994). ♦ Nov. 19 at 7: "Blow to the Heart" (1982). ♦ Nov. 20 at 1: "Bertolucci According to the Cinema" (1975). ♦ Nov. 20 at 3: "The Little Archimedes" (1978). ♦ Nov. 20 at 4:30: "The Keys to the House" (2004). ♦ Nov. 21 at 6: "Peace Is Not Over, So There Is War" (1997) and "Poor Us" (1999). ♦ Nov. 21 at 8: "The End of the Game" (1970). ♦ "'Morocco' at 75." Nov. 21 at 8:30: "Morocco" (1930, Josef von Sternberg), introduced by the curator Charles Silver.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Laurel and Hardy." Nov. 16 at 10:30 A.M. and Nov. 19 and 20 at 2: "Sons of the Desert" (†) and "Blotto" (1930, James Parrott). ♦ Nov. 19 at 4: "Silent Shorts, Program One" (1927-29). ♦ Nov. 20 at 4: "Silent Shorts, Program Two" (1928-29). ♦ "Black Light: Films from the African Diaspora." Nov. 18 at 7:30: "City of God" (2002, Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund; in Portuguese). ♦ "Repertory Nights." Nov. 19 and 20 at 6:30: "Ugetsu" (1953, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. Nov. 18-19: "Performance" (1970, Donald Cammell and Nicolas Roeg).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—"Children in the 20th Century." Nov. 20 at 4 and Nov. 22 at 7:45: "Los Olvidados" (1950, Luis Buñuel; in Spanish). ♦ Nov. 20 at 6:15 and Nov. 22 at 6: "Rodrigo D: No Futuro" (1990, Víctor Gaviria; in Spanish).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Nov. 29: "A Luminous Century: Celebrating Norwegian Cinema." All films are in Norwegian. Nov. 17 at 1:30 and 9: "Jonny Vang" (2003, Jens Lien). ♦ Nov. 17 at 3:30: "Hawaii, Oslo" (2004, Erik Poppe). ♦ Nov. 18 at 1:30 and 7: "The Defenceless" (1939, Leif Sinding). ♦ Nov. 18 at 3 and 8:45: "We Leave for England" (1946, Toralf Sandø). ♦ Nov. 18 at 5 and Nov. 19 at 5:10: "The Battle for Heavy Water" (1948, Titus Vibe-Müller). ♦ Nov. 19 at 1:30 and Nov. 20 at 5: "Street Urchins" (1949, Arne Skouen and Ulf Greber). ♦ Nov. 19 at 3:15 and Nov. 20 at 6:40: "Liv" (1967, Pål Løkkeberg). ♦ Nov. 19 at 7:10: "Kissed by Winter" (2005, Sara Johnsen). ♦ Nov. 20 at 1:30: "Kon-Tiki" (1950, Olle Nordemar). ♦ Nov. 20 at 3 and Nov. 21 at 2:50: "A Young Woman Is Missing" (1953, Edith Carlmar). ♦ Nov. 20 at 8:45: "Next Door" (2005, Pål Sletaune). ♦ Nov. 21 at 1: "An Enemy of the People" (2005, Erik Skjoldbjærg). ♦ Nov. 21 at 9:15 and Nov. 22 at 3:30: "We Are Getting Married" (1951, Nils R. Müller). ♦ Nov. 22 at 1:30: "The Wayward Girl" (1959, Carlmar). ♦ "Independents Night." Nov. 17 at 6:30: "Homemade Hillbilly Jam" (2005, Rick Minnich). ♦ "Open-Captioned for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing." Nov. 21 at 7:15: "Doom" (2005, Andrzej Bartkowiak).

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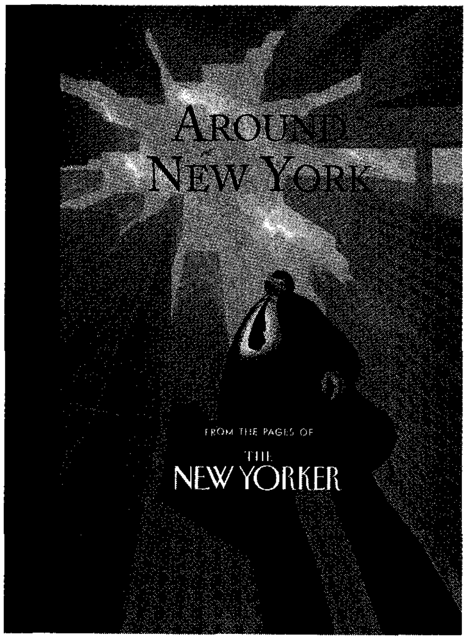

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READINGS AND TALKS

FREDERICK BROSEN
The watercolorist, whose detailed renderings of Manhattan streetscapes were recently collected in the book "Still New York" and which are on display at the Museum of the City of New York, talks on Nov. 16 at 6:30 with the journalist Alan Feuer and the filmmaker Ric Burns. Brosen returns to the museum on Dec. 11 at 2 to demonstrate his painting technique. (Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 212-534-1672.)

"ACADEMY CHANCELLORS' READING"
The Academy of American Poets presents Frank Bidart, Robert Hass, Susan Howe, Galway Kinnell, Philip Levine, Nathaniel Mackey, Heather McHugh, Susan Stewart, Ellen Bryant Voigt, and C. K. Williams. (Proshansky Auditorium, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. Tickets at the door. Nov. 17 at 7.)

MONKEY SEE MONKEY DO
The daylong symposium "Doing Likewise" explores how animals copy humans (think parrots) and humans copy each other (think fashion) and variations on these themes. Hosted by the writer and director Jonathan Miller, the event features Oliver Sacks, Ricky Jay, Anne Hollander, and many others. (Hemmerdinger Hall, New York University, 100 Washington Sq. Park E. For more information, call the New York Institute for the Humanities, at 212-989-2100. Nov. 19, starting at 9:30 A.M.)

"PORN IN THE AGE OF INSTANT ACCESS"
The NPR commentator Brooke Gladstone moderates a discussion about the effects of Internet pornography with Nick Gillespie, the editor of *Reason* magazine, Rachel Kramer Bussel, a columnist for *Penthouse*, Pamela Paul, the author of "Pornified" and "The Starter Marriage," and Ben Shapiro, the author of "Porn Generation." (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. No tickets necessary. Nov. 21 at 6:30.)

CORNELIA STREET CAFÉ
The poets Lawrence Joseph, Hugh Seidman, D. Nurkse, and Angelo Verga read from their work. (29 Cornelia St. 212-989-9319. Nov. 22 at 6.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

REBIRTH
From the late nineteenth century to the Great Depression, vaudeville was the most popular form of theatre in the country. Its biggest stage was the Palace, a Broadway theatre known as the "Valhalla of Vaudeville" (it still exists, incidentally, and next spring it will be home to the Anne Rice-inspired vampire musical, "Lestat," with songs by Elton John and Bernie Taupin). The arrival of radio, movies, and television sent the genre into decline, but this week the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts opens "Vaudeville Nation," an exhibition with joke books, scripts, photographs, and other ephemera associated with its greatest stars, including Jack Benny, Eubie Blake, Fanny Brice, and Harry Houdini. It traces the history of vaudeville, from its family-friendly origins through the changes forced on it by the new technologies—the exhibit includes a section on prologs, the shows that alternated with moving pictures, the last of which ran at Radio City Music Hall in 1979. (40 Lincoln Center Plaza. 212-870-1630. Through April 1, 2006.)

ARM WRESTLING
The 2005 Empire State Golden Arm Tournament of Champions comes to the Port Authority Bus Terminal on Nov. 17 at 12:30, pitting the winners of the preliminary events in the five boroughs, Long Island, and upstate against each other, last year's winners, and anyone else who is interested, male or female, left handed or right: it may be an Empire State title, but the competition is open, and there are no residency requirements. (North-Wing/Main Concourse, 625 Eighth Ave., between 41st and 42nd Sts. Weigh-in starts at 9:30 A.M.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Strolling through the lots for **Doyle's** auction of vintage couture, textiles, and accessories (Nov. 17) will bring to mind images of their onetime owners. What decadent Venetian gentleman donned the rich green-gold-and-silver Fortuny silk-velvet aba (a loose, sleeveless Middle Eastern-style men's garment) as he gazed impassively across the Grand Canal? Some accessories simply evoke money, like an Hermès crocodile Birkin bag trimmed with diamonds. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.) ♦ For some, owning a piece of Bob Dylan is roughly equivalent to (and may cost as much as) acquiring a religious relic from the Holy Land. At **Christie's** sale of rock memorabilia (Nov. 21), there are several Dylan relics to choose from, including an early manuscript of poems and a homemade reel-to-reel recording made by a friend on Thanksgiving, 1961. The following day is devoted to the glamorous and often outrageous designs of Bob Mackie. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ MALBA (the Museum of Latin American Art in Buenos Aires), a stunning structure that opened in 2001, is selling off four important pieces at **Sotheby's** sale of Latin-American art (Nov. 16-17) in order to pay import taxes on other works in its collection; the top lot is "L'Eau," an abstract painting by the Chilean Roberto Matta, the darling of French Surrealism in the nineteen-thirties. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
IT'S BEEN REAL
Dec. 1–31

In 1964, the documentary filmmakers Albert and David Maysles, early masters of cinéma-vérité methods, were with the Beatles at the Plaza Hotel during the Fab Four's invasion of America; in 1970, they documented the dark events at Altamont. "What's Happening! The Beatles in the U.S.A." and "Gimme Shelter" are among the sixteen works in the Museum of Modern Art's series "Maysles Films: Five Decades." (212-708-9480.)

NIGHT LIFE
THE NEW TRINITY
Dec. 9

The Irish vocalist Sinéad O'Connor's short-lived retirement has ended; she has a new album of reggae songs, "Throw Down Your Arms." The legendary Jamaican rhythm section Sly and Robbie, who appear on the album, will join O'Connor at Webster Hall. (212-353-1600.)

ART
MESSINA AT THE MET
Dec. 13–March 5

"Antonello da Messina: Sicily's Renaissance Master," though small, promises to be a powerful show. Among the works loaned from Italian institutions are a rediscovered Madonna and Child from early in the painter's career and his magnificent "The Virgin Annunciate." (212-535-7710.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
HANDEL SEASON
Dec. 14–17

Richard Hickox, noted in his native England for his omnivorous range of repertory, makes his New York Philharmonic début conducting that most familiar of works, Handel's "Messiah." (Riverside Church. 212-875-5656.)

THE THEATRE
MEASURED SUCCESS
Dec. 20–Jan. 1

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, a London company founded by the late American actor Sam Wanamaker, brings its all-male production of "Measure for Measure" to St. Ann's Warehouse for the final stop on its U.S. tour. Complete with lush period costumes, the troupe is led by the acclaimed Shakespearean actor Mark Rylance, who portrays Duke Vincentio in his last performances as artistic director of the Globe. John Dove directs the production. (718-254-8779.)

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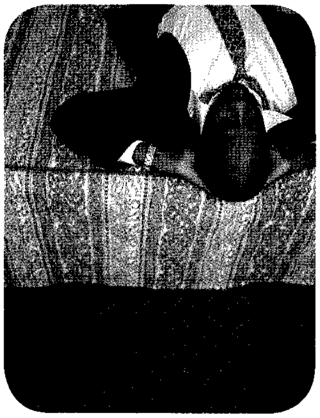

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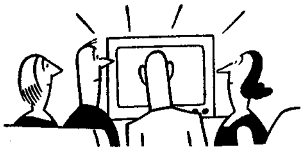
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

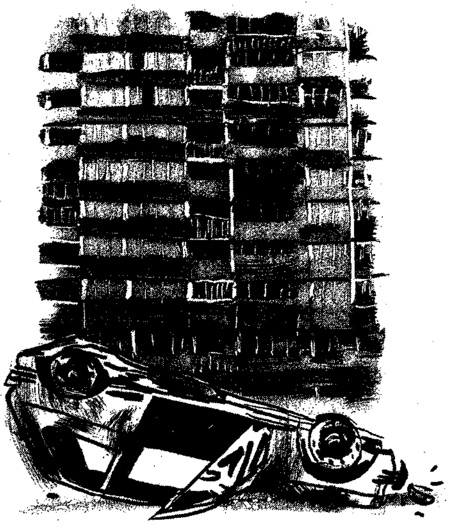
COMMENT
DIFFERENCE



Eight days ago, when the violence that had erupted in three hundred of the immigrant housing projects that circle France's big cities spread, briefly, to Belgium and Germany, the sigh of relief among French politicians could be heard from Lille to Marseilles. "*Voilà!* It isn't us," they seemed to be saying. "It's everywhere." And, in a way, they were right. The immigrant poor are everywhere in Europe now, and what the French novelist Antoine Audouard, writing in the *Times* a few days later, aptly called France—"a society that no longer knows how to enforce its own rules or how to create the dream of a better life for its new generations"—describes more countries than his own. Since the end of the Second World War, Western Europe has been at the center of a labor migration that, in its proportions, rivals the great forced migrations of the Roman Empire; and since the nineteen-fifties and sixties, when Europe's own empires unravelled, the strains of that demographic shock have been compounded by what could be called an implosion of difference, as the colonized fled the chaos—economic, tribal, political—that the colonizers left behind. It is easier to manage difference at a safe colonial remove than it is at home. To say that Europe was unaware of this is an understatement.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Every country with an influx of migrant workers had to scramble toward some sort of social formula to absorb them (or, as often as not, pretend that they weren't there). And before long those formulas had frozen into easy, and, not surprisingly, competing, certainties—all of which have turned out to be as shortsighted as the government-sponsored agents who first combed Africa and Asia and the Indian subcontinent recruiting labor for Europe's postwar factories. There was the British "multicultural" model—or, to put it perhaps more accurately, the "You will never be us" model. There was the "We'll support you, but please be invisible until you *are* us" Scandinavian model. There was the "integrated but not assimilated" oxymoron called the Dutch model. There was the "You're guest workers, so you'll be going home" German model—which, until the late nineties, put off even the possibility of citizenship for most immigrants and their children. Everyone had something to contribute to this debate: the social theorists and social planners and social workers and politicians and, of course, the people who hated immigrants—everyone but the immigrants themselves, who were rarely consulted. The only thing most Europeans agreed on was that the "American model" was wrong, although the American model wasn't really a model at all but a kind of success ethic—the Europeans said "dollar ethic"—in which making money and moving up in the world was what made Americans out of strangers. It was, for better or for worse, the one model that seemed to work.



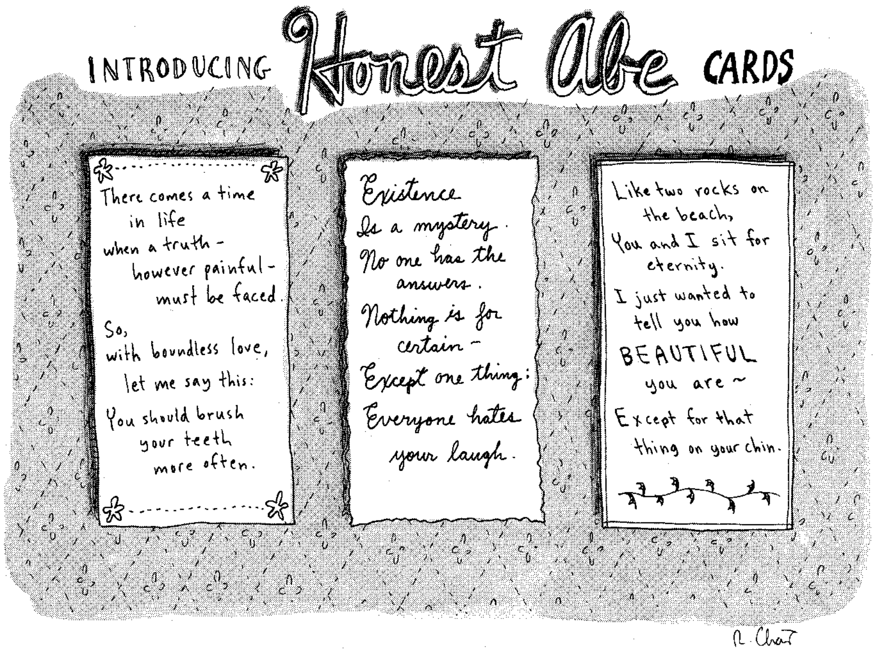
The French model could be called the "You will be us" imperative. All children born in France are citizens at birth, and citizenship, it was believed, confers an instant, almost mystical "Frenchness" on them. But the *cités,* as the immigrants call their projects, belied that fantasy. They were social planning at its most earnest and its worst—the glitch in the French republican case for assimilation. Back in the early fifties, when Le Corbusier designed the first of these projects—Unité d'Habitation, on the outskirts of Marseilles—they were called *villes nouvelles* and declared to be the last word in progressive urban thinking. The idea at first was that soon the middle classes, fleeing their crowded cities, would arrive, and merchants would open stores and big business would start investing. But it was hard to imagine anyone "French" moving to a project who didn't have to. Most of the immigrants had nowhere else to live.

The projects were huge, some of them built for as many as fifty thousand people. And they were grim—cheaply made, almost impossibly monotonous (the government said "modern"), and well beyond the pale of city life or, for that matter, country life. Social psychologists were hired to make the projects "friendly," which is why you will occasionally find, say, circles of faded pink or purple paint on the cinder-block walls. But there was nothing to do in a *cité*, nowhere to go, nothing "French" to attach to. Within a few years, the projects had deteriorated into slums; the new ones—welfare ghettos, targets of choice for construction boondogglers—never pretended to be anything else. The only real investment in most of the *cités* was in cheap chain stores and in schools that taught Frenchness but had no way of folding an immigrant's child into anything resembling French life. Children sang the "Marseillaise" and memorized the lengths of France's rivers, as their parents had in the colonies, but in most ways remained as far from France as their parents had been.

The statistics you read about young Muslims in the *cités* are true: six times the national unemployment rate; five times the incarceration rate. Some ten per cent of France's children are Muslim, and, like all children, they are vulnerable to promises of a newer, "truer" identity that will transform their lives. The problems in the *cités* today are arguably complicated by, or perhaps obscured by, the politics of Islamic identity—by imported imams and Islamist chat rooms and bin Laden posters in teen-age bedrooms—which may be why, when the rioting started, the country's politicians panicked to the point of dazed withdrawal (President Jacques Chirac), or grandstand threats of deportation (Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy), or meaningless pronouncements about a plan for France (Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin).

The riots were undeniably alarming, as much for the carnage—one man beaten to death, sixty-five hundred buses and cars torched, a dozen schools set on fire—as for the political incapacity they revealed. (The number of arrests has, in fact, been small—a couple of thousand—compared with the fifteen thousand arrests in October of 1961, when Algerians were demonstrating in Paris.) By now, the rioting has become sporadic, but the rioters' rage was so self-punishing, so focussed on their own lives and neighborhoods, that an obvious lesson should have been drawn by the Élysée the day the first bus burned. The kids who are rioting hate their lives. They are lonely for France; they are sickeningly disappointed in France, in the promise of France. And, in desperation, they are attacking their own half-world *cités*. They want the real cities, where the "French" live. A few years ago, the Minister of Urban Affairs, Jean-Louis Borloo, took the unthinkable step of demolishing tens of thousands of apartments in the worst of the *cités*. Richard Descoing, the director of the Institut d'Études Politiques, or Sciences Po, launched what amounts to an affirmative-action program—the French called it "positive discrimination"—bringing bright young graduates from the *cités* into one of the most prestigious schools in France. Those men made the first cracks in the national myth that the badge of citizenship makes happy citizens. But, so far, no one else has.

—*Jane Kramer*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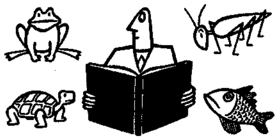
Like two rocks on the beach, You and I sit for eternity. I just wanted to tell you how BEAUTIFUL you are ~ Except for that thing on your chin.
R. Chast

DEPT. OF ADAPTATION
DARWIN IN MANHATTAN



On Election Day, as the Kansas school board was voting to allow the teaching of intelligent design as an alternative to evolution, a couple of fifty-pound Galápagos tortoises were settling in to their temporary new Manhattan home, at the American Museum of Natural History. For the next six months, the tortoises will be the star attractions (along with five Argentine horned frogs and a green iguana) in a major exhibit on Charles Darwin.

The exhibit opens later this week, but last Wednesday museum workers were allowed a preview. The tortoises, made famous when Darwin wrote, in "The Origin of Species," of riding atop their shells, are positioned at the end of the Hall of Amphibians and Reptiles, just outside the exhibit's entrance, and a few employees had stopped to observe them while waiting for Michael Novacek, the curator of the Division of Paleontology, to arrive for a tour.

"Uh-oh, he's discovered the lock," one said as a tortoise gnawed repeatedly at a piece of metal in the corner of the terrarium, a kind of reptilian studio apartment.

"We're lucky to be seeing them now," another said. "Once they get acclimated, they'll stop moving around and they won't do anything."

The tortoise abandoned his gnawing and started padding away, just as Novacek arrived. "When do they become sexually active?" an onlooker asked.

"Let's see, they're sixteen?" Novacek said. "I don't want to call them teen-agers, but right about now, as a matter of fact."

Novacek, who was wearing a conservative suit and a neatly trimmed beard, led the way into the exhibit and stopped in front of an encased magnifying glass, Darwin's own. "It's a very simple instrument," he said. "We want people to get the sense that he defined biology, and yet he used very simple tools."

Novacek proceeded through several installations devoted to Darwin's childhood, and a picture gradually emerged of the biologist as a young man: by no means an élitist egghead but, rather, an aimless, God-fearing everyman. Pausing in front of young Darwin's beetle collection, Novacek noted the sign above, which read "Beetle Mania," and said, "Darwin was not very attentive at school, not a good student. We want kids to relate to that."

"He liked the notion of being a clergyman," Novacek went on as he continued past Charles's rock hammer and arrived at a glass case featuring a Bible and a small pistol: proper red-state accessories for a long sea voyage, in this case aboard the famous H.M.S. Beagle.

Novacek stopped in front of a painstaking re-creation of Darwin's study at Down House, in Kent, where he wrote "The Origin," complete with his walking stick and his whiskey, and then moved to a couple of low video monitors. "We tried to go over the theory in several ways," he said. "It's really not that complicated." At the top of one screen, where green- and orange-colored insects crawled over a bed of leaves, were the words "Which ladybugs are most likely to be eaten?" Bird beaks appeared from above, pecking the bugs one by one. The orange crawlers, being more conspicuous, were the first to die off, and the heading soon changed: "Now which ladybugs survive and reproduce?"

A man attempted to toggle the leaves' pigmentation from green to orange, using a lever at the foot of the screen, in the hope of reversing the survival pattern. The lone remaining green ladybug continued dancing around.

"Why aren't the birds eating him?" someone asked.

"They're just full, I guess," the toggler said.

The tour was near completion, and not a word had been spoken about Darwin's current status as a man in the news. "It's not escaped our notice that the theory is controversial," Novacek said at last. (He explained that Darwin had sat on his theory for nearly twenty years, fearing scandal.) He pointed to a wall that offered what he called "contextual bits": mentions of the Scopes trial; the introduction, in England, of a ten-pound bank note with Darwin's likeness on it; and the briefest nod to the Dover, Pennsylvania, school-board trial, concerning intelligent design, that is winding down right now.

"We can't say how it will turn out," Novacek said, referring to Dover. "But the point is the larger context, which extends back a hundred and fifty years. What we're currently seeing is what Darwin correctly anticipated."

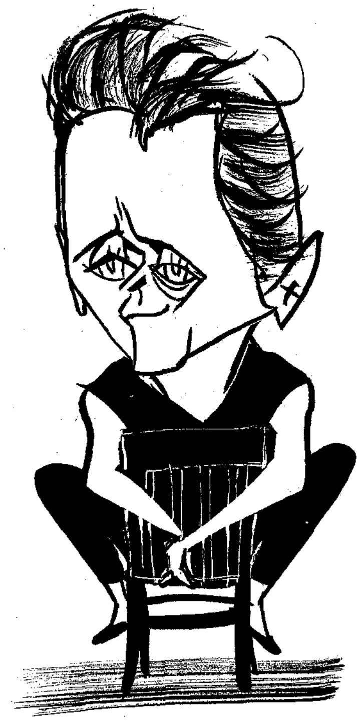
Soon after Novacek finished speaking these words, a loud alarm sounded, accompanied by a brief flash of light; one of the staffers had put his hand too close to a biology textbook that was mounted next to a cautionary sticker of the type used in Cobb County, Georgia, to warn that a book includes "material on evolution." The tour ended in the gift shop: bearded Darwin dolls, finger puppets, stuffed tortoises. "There's a lot of Darwin-O-Rama right now," Novacek said, seeming pleased.

Had Darwin correctly anticipated the commodification of natural selection? A man in line to pay glanced over at an employee who was fooling around with the Darwin finger-puppet magnets. The man spoke with a European accent: "I'm sure this is what he always wanted: to be stuck on our refrigerators."

—*Ben McGrath*

THE CREATIVE LIFE
CROSS-POLLINATION

The Baryshnikov Arts Center, where the great Russo-American dancer, who is now fifty-seven, hopes to make life better for performing artists, didn't open officially until this month. But the center, housed in a new building on West Thirty-seventh Street, actually got going earlier this year, when it inaugurated fellowships for young artists, who are given studio space, technological support (light, sound, video), and some money to get their shows together. They are also assigned mentors, of their choosing. The playwright Edwin Sanchez worked with Anton Dudley, a recent graduate of the theatre program at N.Y.U.'s Tisch School. Tere O'Connor, the veteran downtown choreographer, helped Jamie Allen, a multimedia artist, and Beliz Demircioglu, a choreographer—they, too, are Tisch alumni—put together a complicated dance-cum-video production. Also in operation is a program that offers residencies to mid-career artists, allowing them to work, at no cost, in big, clean, airy studios.



Mikhail Baryshnikov

More than anything, though, Mikhail Baryshnikov intends the center as a meeting place. "I wanted to bring people together in an informal way," he says. "So many collaborations in the theatre, it's just some producer thinks, Well, this guy had a nomination for Emmy, so, O.K., let's have him. But it doesn't have to be well-known choreographer. Could be fair chance given to a young person. I think better collaborative juices grow when people meet on free turf. You're a poet; I'm a filmmaker. You're a choreographer; I'm a playwright. People see each other's work and exchange telephone numbers, and that's how it starts." It has started already. Dancers working with Aszure Barton, who had a residency in the summer, invited the cast from "Hurlyburly," which was playing at a theatre downstairs from the center, to their rehearsals. Scott Elliott, the director of "Hurlyburly," came, too, and ended up asking Barton to create the dances for his next show, "The Threepenny Opera."

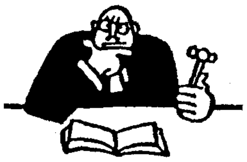
Baryshnikov hasn't forgotten his youth, in Russia. All he longed for then was to be a ballet dancer, but he found the dance world confining: "It's a ghetto. People talk about how they are tired, and their injuries, and it's not fair that this one is dancing this and that one is dancing that." He sought out people in other fields: "I lived in dormitory with couple of musicians who were ten years older than me. One was a clarinet player, and one a French-horn player. They are dead now. One commit suicide, and the other died a few years ago. But they were the ones who taught me everything about music. I discovered Kirov Opera with them. That was my university. Also, they taught me ethics of the theatre: how to deal with bad people, how to go around them, and when you can confront them. That's very important. Musicians are very sweet, but also smart, too. Street-smart."

Then came the theatre folk. "We hung out with actors and playwrights much older than we are, because how much more interesting, if you're accepted by these people. And when somebody of that generation speaks—and even if it's about jokes, or if it's about depth, secrets of the theatre—somehow it sits in you with a better cemented platform."

That dialogue is what he's trying to reproduce at the center. For Allen and Demircioglu's project, he got Merce Cunningham to come and comment. "It was the most fascinating hour. There is Cunningham, with these kids. I was sitting, and my stomach was—I don't know. I was in tears, practically. Can you imagine, when you're twenty and you didn't even start your career, and Merce Cunningham comes and talks to you about your work?" He gasps.

—Joan Acocella

THE BENCH
SCOTUS WATCH



In the months since Sandra Day O'Connor announced her retirement, Americans have become obsessed with judge-watching. The new pastime practically eclipsed the World Series, with fans paying more attention to Harriet Miers's eye makeup than to Jermaine Dye's batting average. Consequently, this has been a good year for a Web site called Underneath Their Robes, which has established itself as the unofficial blog of record about the federal judiciary. There's plenty of inside dope on the site, including comprehensive dossiers on various jurists and the identities of each new group of law clerks at the Supreme Court, but its real appeal lies in the distinctive voice of its pseudonymous author, Article III Groupie. (Article III of the Constitution established the federal judiciary.)

A3G, as she calls herself, writes like a boozy débutante, dishing about the wardrobes, work habits, and idiosyncrasies of the "superhotties of the federal judiciary" and "Bodacious Babes of the Bench." The author is keen on the new Chief Justice, writing, on one occasion, "Judge Roberts is lookin' super-hunky tonight, much younger than his 50 years. . . . The adorable dimple in his chin is making A3G dizzy." In contrast, she had doubts about Harriet Miers, posting a "Hairstyle Retrospective" and noting, "If Harriet Miers wins confirmation, maybe Supreme Court justices should start wearing powdered wigs." Her posts on the new Supreme Court nominee, Samuel Alito, have included a report—a "judicial sightation"—of the Judge stopping in at a Newark pizza shop, and a sizing up of Alito's teen-age son: "Since he's 19, A3G is permitted to say: he's a hottie!"

The blog has many fans, including Richard Posner, the legal scholar and federal appeals-court judge in Chicago. "The beauty contests between judges can't be taken very seriously, but I enjoy the site," he said. "It presents good information about clerkships and candidates. It's occasionally a little vulgar, but this is America in 2005."

In the autobiographical section of the blog, A3G says that she attended an Ivy League college and a top-five law school, clerked for a federal appellate judge, and had several interviews for clerkships on the Supreme Court—"but they ended in tragedy (i.e., with her not getting a job with the Supremes)." She goes on, "Article III Groupie then went to work for a large law firm in a major city, where she now toils in obscurity. During her free time, she consoles herself through the overconsumption of luxury goods."

In real life, A3G is a thirty-year-old Newark-based assistant U.S. attorney named David Lat. "The blog really reflects two aspects of my personality," he said over lunch recently. "I am very interested in serious legal issues as well as in fun and frivolous and gossipy issues. I can go from the *Harvard Law Review* to *Us Weekly* very quickly." Lat, who has a boyish face, lives in Manhattan and commutes to New Jersey, and he writes his blog entries in his spare time. Like A3G, he graduated from Harvard College and Yale Law School, and he worked briefly at a big New York law firm. Although his current job as a prosecutor has required him to pare back his life style, he says, "I still hoard toiletries from luxury hotels all over the world." Lat interviewed for a Supreme Court clerkship, with Justice Antonin Scalia, but he didn't get it.

"Yale treats certain judges like celebrities," he said. "And I've always had a certain status anxiety about not having clerked on the Supreme Court." (A3G often refers to Supreme Court clerks as "the Elect.") "My interest in celebrity has kind of metastasized from the judges to the clerks," he added.

Lat is proud that some of his catchphrases have slipped into wider circulation—"litigatrix," "judicial diva," and "bench-slap" (for disputes among judges). Although he intended to remain anonymous, the success of the blog made coming clean irresistible. "I felt frustrated that I was putting a lot of time into this and was unable to get any credit for it," Lat said. "But eventually these things have a way of coming out anyway. I only hope that the judges I appear in front of don't read it."

—Jeffrey Toobin

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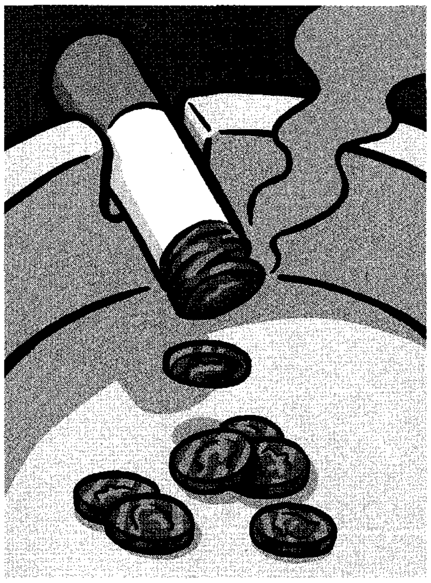
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
UP IN SMOKE

In 1638, Ch'ung-chen, the last Ming emperor, declared war on tobacco: anyone caught importing or using it would have his head chopped off. Ch'ung-chen was not the only seventeenth-century monarch to take a hard line on the matter. Thirty-four years earlier, James I of England had written "A Counterblaste to Tobacco," a tract that condemned smoking as "a custome lothsome to the eye, hatefull to the Nose, harmefull to the braine, dangerous to the Lungs." But, as a lawmaker, James adopted a more circuitous approach to regulation. At first, he attempted to banish smoking by raising tobacco taxes four thousand per cent. When that didn't work, he decided that, if people were going to smoke, the state should at least profit, and he established a royal monopoly on tobacco.

Today, the opposing impulses to profit or to punish—capitation vs. decapitation, as it were—continue to shape the relationship between the U.S. government and the tobacco industry. On the one hand, the state reaps huge rewards from Americans' addiction to nicotine: smokers pay twelve billion dollars a year in tobacco taxes, and the tobacco companies, as a result of a settlement signed in 1998 with forty-six states, pay state governments close to eight billion dollars a year. On the other hand, policymakers looking to curb smoking favor increasingly Draconian solutions. The Justice Department, for instance, is in the midst of a racketeering suit against those same companies, alleging that they have engaged in a half-century-long conspiracy to defraud the American public, and originally seeking punitive damages on a scale that could have bankrupted the industry. (That request for damages has been tossed out of court, but a verdict on the racketeering charges is expected soon.) One wing of government, in other words, is partnering with tobacco while the other is trying to demolish it.

For the tobacco companies, this is pretty much business as usual. The industry now spends more than half a billion dollars a year in legal fees, and billions of dollars a year in settlements. In strict monetary terms, the settlement with the states might seem like a bad deal for the tobacco companies. Research by W. Kip Viscusi, a Harvard economist (and frequent pro-tobacco witness), suggests that if you take into account tobacco taxes and the higher mortality rates of smokers, which reduce the government's Social Security and Medicare payments, smoking actually saves the public money. But the tobacco companies signed the agreement because the threat of nearly every state in the union suing to recoup health-care costs was a risk that investors were unable to gauge and therefore unwilling to take. Controlling how much they'd owe and meeting the government halfway, as opposed to having to worry about what forty-six different juries might decide, was worth the money.



CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

In the popular imagination, tobacco companies are wily manipulators, expertly spinning juries, corrupting legislators, and deceiving the public. However, Big Tobacco's penchant for deception has made its problems worse, not better. It's certainly well documented that the industry tried to distort the health risks associated with smoking and foster the illusion that the science of smoking was an "open question." But, strangely, there's little sign that the strategy ever worked. In 1964, when the Surgeon General declared that cigarette smoking was the leading cause of lung cancer and that it dramatically increased the risk of dying from bronchitis, emphysema, and heart disease, well over forty per cent of Americans smoked. That number dropped sharply through the sixties, then continued to decline until, by 1990, the percentage of American smokers had been cut roughly in half. Cigarette packs have been required to carry health warnings since the sixties, and surveys today show that a large majority of smokers and nonsmokers alike associate smoking with a higher risk of cancer and of mortality, and in fact overestimate the chance of getting lung cancer from smoking (though they also underestimate their own chances of dying).

The irony is that tobacco executives apparently made exactly the same assumption that many antismoking activists do: that if people knew the risks of smoking no one would smoke. But events of the past decade suggest otherwise: Philip Morris now runs ads about the dangers of smoking; R. J. Reynolds proclaims that smoking is "a significant risk factor for many chronic diseases including heart disease and lung cancer"; as cigarette prices have skyrocketed, there's been only a small decline in the percentage of Americans who smoke, and there's been a steady increase in industry profits. (The companies may sell fewer cigarettes, but they can charge more for them.) If tobacco companies had known, half a century ago, that so many consumers would accept the level of risk that smoking represents, they'd surely have acted differently.

Although the Justice Department lawsuit was an ill-conceived attempt to achieve through litigation what couldn't be achieved through legislation, the impulse that drove it remains potent. Increasingly, tobacco chiefs seem to have realized that it's in their best interests to coöperate with government, sacrificing freedom in order to avoid prosecution, and effectively buying protection with revenue. Instead of fleeing regulation, Philip Morris is asking the Food and Drug Administration to oversee the sale of tobacco. The current lawsuit, however, shows that while some parts of the government are starting to act like King James, there are still plenty of Ch'ung-chens out there.

—*James Surowiecki*

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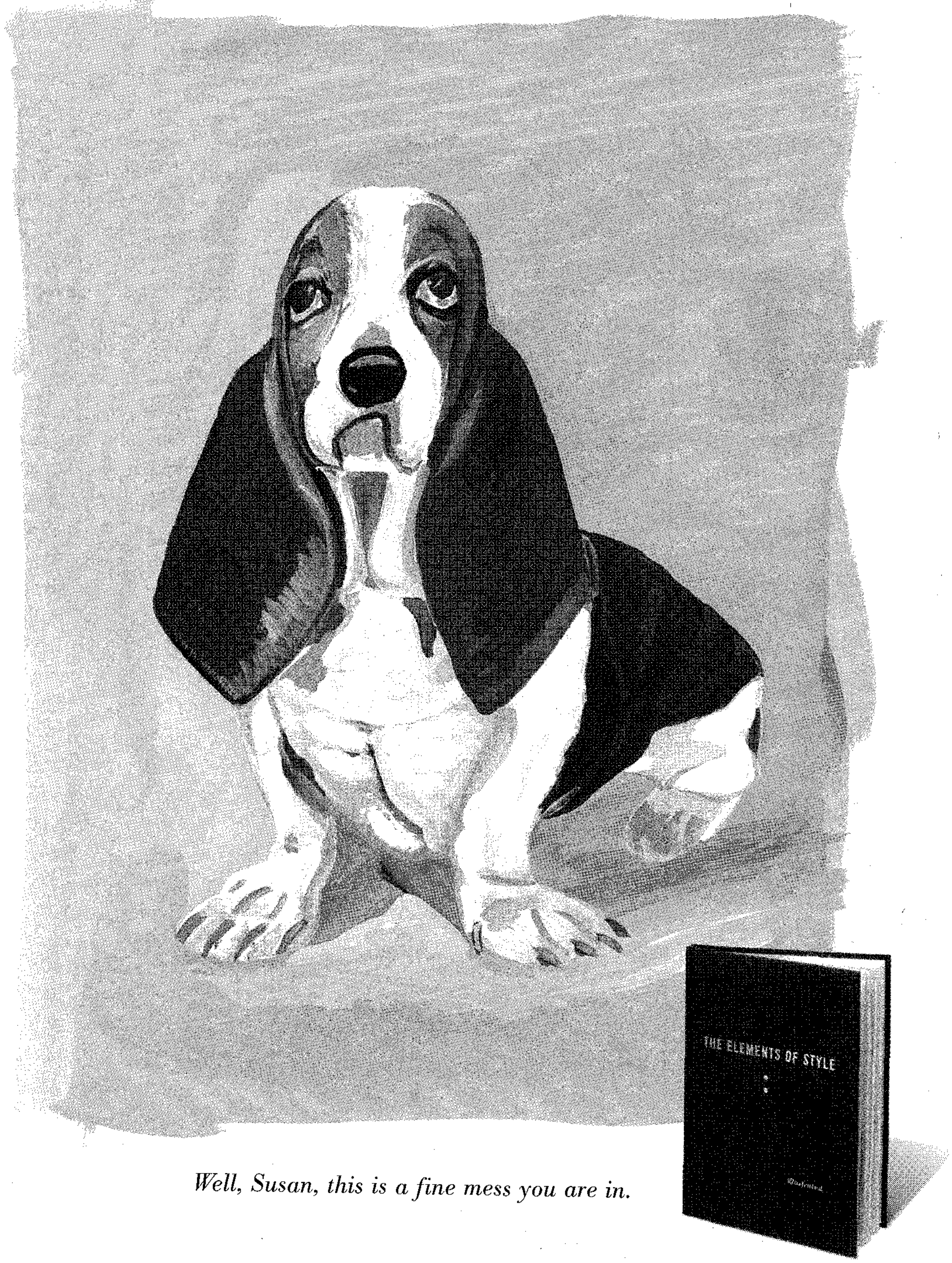

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LETTER FROM KASHMIR

FAULT LINES

After the earthquake, some strange new alliances.

BY STEVE COLL

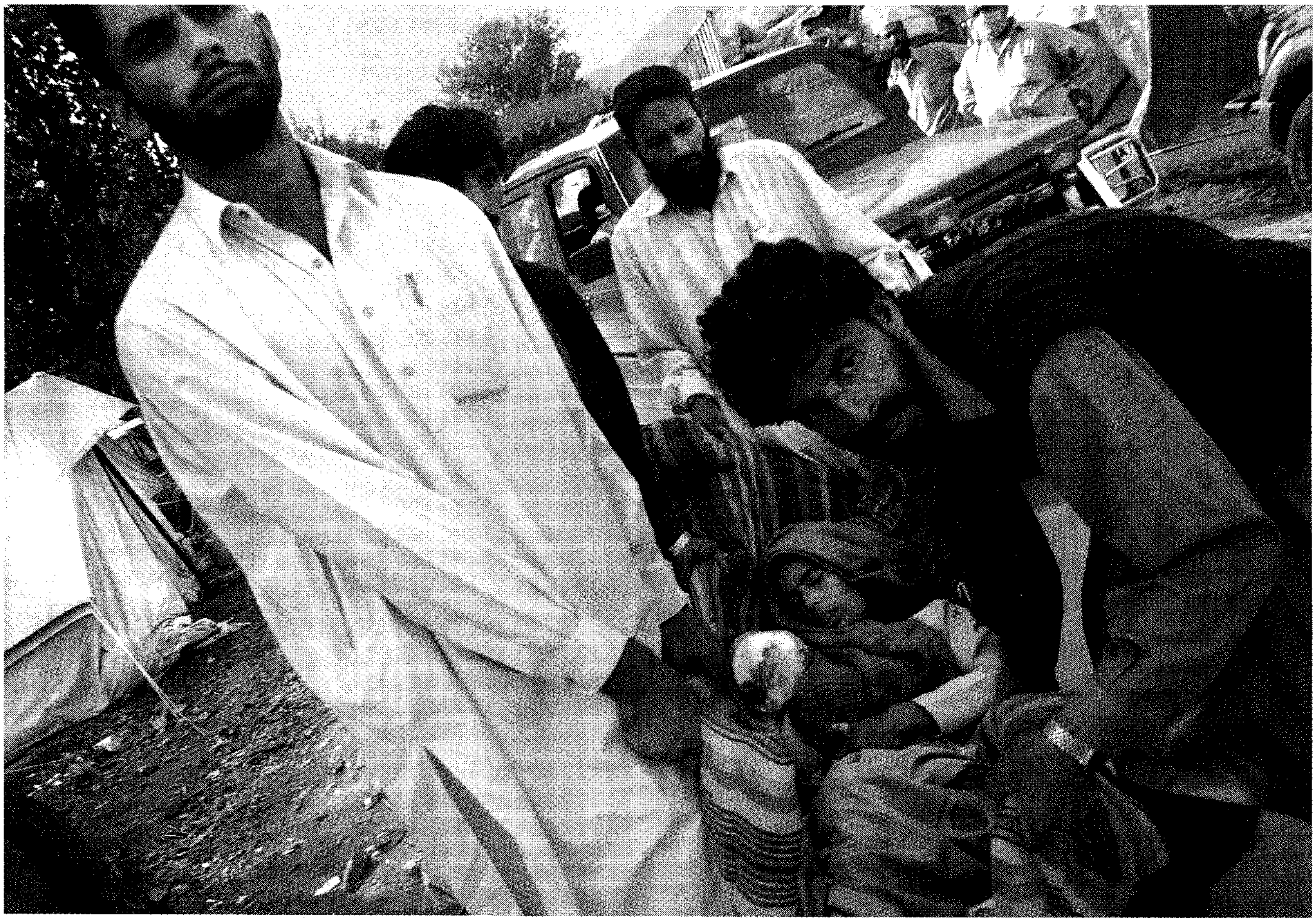
The earthquake that struck northern Pakistan on the morning of October 8th left some eighty thousand people dead, perhaps a quarter of them children. It was a catastrophe without precedent in the country's history, and the government was slow to react. In the weeks that followed, President Pervez Musharraf, who is also the nation's military leader, faced sharp questions from civilian politicians, Islamic leaders, and reporters about why the government, and the Army, had not organized relief more quickly. In much the same way that the Bush Administration's reaction to Hurricane Katrina embarrassed the White House, the earthquake-aid effort has threatened Musharraf's standing. In the first days, Pakistan's offshore independent channels televised the suffering, and the images were inescapable: people waiting in vain to be rescued; hundreds of thousands sleeping outside in cold rain, waiting for tent camps to be built; the injured, with bleeding wounds or broken limbs, staggering about in search of treatment.

Musharraf seized power in a coup, six years ago, and at the time he described the Army as the "last institution of stability left in Pakistan"—the only body disciplined enough to fix the country's ills. Since then, he has expanded the military's influence in national life, yet, when the earthquake hit, the Army appeared neither efficient nor consumed by any sense of urgency. The Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy, a coalition of opposition parties, demanded an official investigation into what its spokesman called "the failure of the Army high command." The United Nations warned that thousands of earthquake survivors could die from exposure if relief did not reach them before winter, yet, ten days after the earthquake struck, Musharraf's government signed a billion-dollar contract for Swedish military surveillance aircraft, a bewildering priority. The *Friday Times*, one of Pakistan's leading newspapers, suggested in a front-page editorial that Musharraf's insistence on heavy defense spending might explain the slow pace of donations to the U.N. for earthquake relief: "If you were a Westerner asked to provide humanitarian financial assistance to a country led by a military government obsessed with the regional 'military balance,' what would you think?" A week later, Musharraf announced that he would postpone buying American-made F-16 fighter jets, at least until the financial pressures of earthquake relief had eased.

At a news conference, he dismissed criticism of his government's performance as irresponsible harping by media skeptics and discredited politicians. "Panic and alarm in the face of a calamity are signs of weakness and defeat—let's come out of that," he said. He vowed to "prove the cynics wrong" by rallying the troops and attracting support from Western military allies. Adding to his difficulties was the fact that many of the hardest-hit villages were in Kashmir, whose land and people are at the center of Pakistan's most emotional national cause—the fifty-eight-year conflict with India over its political destiny. He said that the Army was moving into Kashmir, and that aid would reach the region's stranded victims by winter. The Army's sluggish reaction may be explained, in part, by its own heavy losses in the area where the quake hit. According to an Army spokesman, four hundred and fifty officers and soldiers died on the first day, and seven hundred and eleven were injured. To judge by the damage I saw in Army camps in Kashmir, the actual toll may be higher; scores of Army wives and children also perished as cantonments and schools collapsed.

The epicenter of the earthquake was about sixty-five miles northeast of Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, in a mountainous region traversed by two narrow, perpendicular river valleys, the

Neelum and the Jhelum. The Jhelum River flows from Indian-held Kashmir west into Pakistan, and, weeks after the quake struck, recovery still seemed far off. One afternoon, in a ragged encampment of tents and tarps on the south bank, several dozen displaced Kashmiri women squatted on rocky ground, sorting through heaps of donated clothing. Smoke drifted from smoldering piles of neckties and sports jerseys that had been judged unusable and set on fire, and a heavy scent of sulfur rose from piles of fallen rock where the dead still lay. Helicopters bearing aid and supplies passed back and forth overhead. In an open field across the road, a Pakistani Army brigade had set up an olive caravan tent dubbed Operations Center 212, where a colonel shouted exasperated instructions into a field telephone. A wiry young major named Fayyaz Ahmed led me to a map of Kashmir mounted on an easel to explain why the relief campaign was proving so daunting.



Surveying the carnage, one army major said, "It is the magnitude of a nuclear bomb." Photograph by Patrick Andrade.

POLARIS

There were enormous geographical problems, he said. About eighty thousand farmers and herders and their families lived in scattered villages on ridges overlooking the Jhelum River in this district alone, and they were reluctant to leave their land. Rock slides had blocked many of the dirt tracks that connected them to the valley. There were military constraints, too, he pointed out. Pakistani and Indian forces were deployed in large numbers along the Line of Control, the undeclared border that has divided Kashmir since 1949; stripes of black Magic Marker on the Major's map indicated their gridlocked positions. After several weeks of stilted negotiations, India and Pakistan had produced a modest plan to allow some relief supplies to cross the border, but, even with the agreement, passage by Kashmiris remains highly restricted. Each side has been tending its own victims. "The Pakistani Army is trained for any job that we are assigned—floods, elections, epidemics," Major Ahmed told me. But, referring to the earthquake and its aftermath, he said, "It is the magnitude of a nuclear bomb."

The only way to reach many of the most vulnerable survivors was to walk. The morning after my conversation with Major Ahmed, I joined an Army mule column as it climbed out of a base camp at Hattian Dupatta, along the Jhelum River, whose jade-green waters run between steep mountain walls. The column comprised twenty-nine Pakistani soldiers, nineteen mules, and two intrepid dogs. As Musharraf issued his pledges in Islamabad, the Army dispatched several fresh brigades into the mountains, and they fanned out into villages on the highest ridges. Mules that were normally used to haul ammunition to the Pakistani bunkers closest to the Line of Control were requisitioned for relief work. Each of the animals was loaded down with more than two hundred pounds of blankets, cardboard boxes bulging with clothes, and burlap sacks of grain. A dozen of the soldiers in this unit carried forty-pound canvas packs to supplement the mules.

"I have never seen anything like this," Alam Khan, a weathered corporal from Pakistan's Punjab province, said as we marched past lines of displaced villagers, some with their arms in slings, others with bandaged heads or legs. Khan enlisted in the Army nineteen years ago and knew these ridges as scenes of military conflict. "The villagers, when tensions run high, can't even do free farming out on their terraces, because the Indians fire at them," he said. "They and their animals are often wounded." Half a mile up, a section of the gorge wall had collapsed. Small tombstones protruded at odd angles from a mound of dirt. A bloated corpse wrapped in a black shroud lay on top of the mound. Apparently, the person had been killed by a falling graveyard.

Kashmir's mountains are the foothills of the Himalayas. They rise between four thousand and seven thousand feet above sea level, and mark a sort of tectonic intersection. For ages, the Indian subcontinent has been sliding northward at a pace of about one and a half inches a year, and the movement pushes up rough, crumbly surfaces; a web of fault lines runs beneath. Kashmiri villagers cut small terraces into the slopes to farm corn and rice, and most build their own huts from timber, stone, and mud. Not all of them are destitute. As Pakistan's urban areas prospered, beginning in the nineteen-sixties, thousands of mountain villagers migrated to cities like Lahore and Rawalpindi to work as cooks, drivers, and domestic help, leaving their families behind to farm or herd goats. Some got as far as Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, where they prospered, and then returned to build houses with concrete foundations and Chinese-style peaked tin roofs—an odd sight amid the shabby lean-tos of their neighbors, and miles from any paved road. The earthquake demolished many of these houses; in the villages we visited, the only difference between rich and poor seemed to be the size of their piles of rubble.

As our mule column followed a dirt track along the ridge, we handed out blankets and food. After six miles, we reached Bandi, a village of about a hundred and fifty houses scattered on the slopes. Nearly all of the houses had been destroyed, and the villagers said that eighty people had died there on the morning of the earthquake. Some of the injured rested on open ground. About a hundred and twenty people in the next village had died. Up and down the hills, the story was the same.

A dozen Bandi men surrounded a Pakistani major and shouted that rival villagers who lived closer to the military base camps were stealing their aid allotments.The major, a tall, clean-shaven man who wore a black baseball cap, said he would make sure that those who had been left out got their share. Mohammed Yousef, a slender man of about fifty with a wispy beard, watched from nearby, standing above a rock shelf that had been the foundation of his house. He had stacked all that was salvageable—three metal trunks, a dartboard, and half a wooden door—on one side. The Army hadn't reached this ridge until ten days after the earthquake. Then the officers had handed out slips of paper entitling each family to a tent, to be picked up at a base camp in the valley. "When we went down, they didn't have any," Yousef said. Too many of his Kashmiri neighbors "are not afraid of God," he added. "If you are a muscleman, a bully, you can get what you need. But if you are a gentleman, if you wait, you suffer."

2nd PERIOD OPEN-MIKE PHYSICS

Salman Rushdie, in his recent novel "Shalimar the Clown," about the history of Kashmir's multiple betrayals, imagines an American diplomat in Los Angeles who is invited to appear on a late-night talk show. He seizes the opportunity to expound on the fallen paradise of Kashmir, and his appalled host can hear only "the sound of channels being changed all over America round about midnight"—anticipating the history lesson to come. In the summer of 1947, Pakistan was carved out of British India, which had more than five hundred princely states; one of them, the predominantly Muslim Kashmir, was ruled by a Hindu maharaja, who could not decide whether to join India or Pakistan. In October, tribesmen from the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan invaded Kashmir, arriving in British trucks. That hastened the maharaja's decision to join India, and India quickly responded by airlifting troops into the region. Sir Douglas Gracey, the British general in command of Pakistan's new national Army, refused to lead the Army into Indian-held Kashmir; he did not want to fight British officers who were assigned to Indian units. Nevertheless, the fighting continued, until the U.N. endorsed a ceasefire line, in January, 1949. Since then, two more wars, several insurgencies, and countless political maneuvers have failed to settle the issue of the "ownership" of Kashmir. Pakistan and India have strengthened their armies over the years; in 1998, both tested nuclear weapons. Although the struggle is supposedly about the interests of ordinary Kashmiris, they have little to show for it. If the conflict is ever settled peacefully, the ceasefire line—which was named the Line of Control in 1972—will likely become an international border; as a practical matter, it already is.

One afternoon, I boarded a Pakistani Puma helicopter that was to ferry displaced villagers and supplies to the northern reaches of the Neelum Valley, a river gorge that snakes about a hundred and twenty miles toward the Himalayas, often very close to Indian territory; landslides had sealed off the valley and blocked the only road in or out. Our pilot, Major Qasim Abbas, zigzagged north through steep canyons. In many places, the sides of mountains had fallen down, as if they had been sliced off with a giant axe. Boulders lay on the narrow dirt roads below us, and hundreds of people walked in uneven lines along the slopes, with bundles of donated food or clothing on their shoulders, collected from the valley's helicopter-supplied relief depots.

As we approached the Line of Control, Abbas lost his way. He made a U-turn in the gorge, swung right into another canyon, and then hurriedly made a second U-turn. A soldier assigned to spotter duty pointed down at a tricolor Indian flag flapping directly underneath the helicopter. "I never knew that the Line of Control was so close there," the Major told me later, with an insouciant grin. As one of the small coöperative measures to aid earthquake relief, India and Pakistan have agreed not to shoot down each other's helicopters if they fly close to the line on relief missions. It's hard to imagine how the two militaries keep track of the line in any event. The border twists from side to side and up and down, as if tracing the fingers of a very thick hand.

Behind their battlements, India and Pakistan have tried to build up political structures to promote their claims to all of Kashmir, while tightening their hold on the ground that they already possess. On Pakistan's side, this approach has given birth to what it calls the state of Azad (or "Free") Kashmir; it has its own constitution and Prime Minister, but "azad" is mainly just a branding strategy. Kashmiri politicians who hold office in Azad Kashmir must swear a loyalty oath to Pakistan—they are not free to seek independence. Tens of thousands of Pakistani troops roam Azad Kashmir, and its budget is supplemented by Islamabad. The capital, Muzaffarabad, a hilly, smoky town of about a hundred thousand that spills across bluffs at the intersection of the Jhelum and Neelum Rivers, presents a strange blend of commercial flair, kitschy decorations, and a culture of Islamic martyrdom. A mock ballistic missile on a launcher points down the Srinagar Road, toward Indian forces on the Line of Control, and large, bright-orange synthetic palm trees with orange coconuts have been placed at some of the town's major intersections. The earthquake brought much of this political whimsy to a halt. Muzaffarabad was devastated; buildings and markets collapsed, and thousands of residents were killed.

Late one afternoon in Muzaffarabad, I visited Azad Kashmir's Prime Minister, a center-right career politician named Sardar Sikander Hayat Khan, at his official residence, a one-story bungalow with several annexes. The Prime Minister himself had been displaced by the earthquake; his bungalow was badly cracked, and one of the annexes had collapsed. He was now living on his front lawn in a large white tent. On the grass, near a rose bush, Khan had placed some blue cushioned chairs and couches in a circle, to replicate his reception room. He has a white mustache and an enormous belly, and he wore a traditional Pakistani shalwar kameez, an olive sports coat, and plaid bedroom slippers.

Kashmiri Muslims who seek independence for their region regard politicians like Khan, who want to keep ties to Islamabad, as Pakistani quislings. He himself argues that Kashmir legally belongs with Pakistan and that it will develop faster under Pakistani oversight. He described himself as a practical man who has worked "day and night" for years to lift Azad Kashmir out of poverty. "I promised to the nation that no house shall be without electricity," he said, and he claimed that he had almost reached his goal this year. But when the earthquake struck, he said, "what we achieved in forty years, that was gone in forty seconds." A minister in his cabinet, twenty senior civil servants, and hundreds of other government employees died.

Khan said that the earthquake would bring Pakistan and Azad Kashmir even closer, explaining that aid pouring in from Islamabad would remind Kashmiri Muslims where their future lay. The previous night had been chilly, and I asked the Prime Minister if he was cold sleeping in his tent. "At three o'clock, I was

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freezing," he said. "I was wearing my sweater and blankets. At four o'clock, I went inside." His servants insisted that he go back out. Aftershocks continued to shake the city, and they feared that his house would fall on him. The Prime Minister shivered in his tent until dawn.

IMPERSONATOR OF BLANK WALLS

Even as a child you sought to be invisible.
You went and hid under the bed
And let your mother search for you everywhere
When it was time for dinner.

In school you liked erasers
More than you did pencils.
Empty rooms at dusk meant more to you
Than going to the movies.

Your date waited for you in the park,
While you sat in your kitchen
Cutting your head and neck
Out of old family photographs,

Giving yourself again the appearance
You had on snowy evenings
Coming home to your parents
With your hair and eyebrows all white.

—*Charles Simic*

For the past fifteen years, the Pakistani Army has supported rebellion on India's side of the Line of Control by aiding violent Islamic groups, some of them with ties to Al Qaeda, that are seeking to unify all of Kashmir with Pakistan. One of the most prominent of these groups has been Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Righteous), which, in December, 2001, the Bush Administration designated a foreign terrorist organization. Lashkar-e-Taiba was—and still is, depending on whom you ask—a radical jihad and proselytizing organization that has carried out persistent and sometimes spectacular attacks against Indian targets, both military and civilian, in Kashmir and elsewhere. Under American pressure, President Musharraf formally banned Lashkar-e-Taiba in early 2002, but he allowed it to create a domestic charity under a new name, Jamaat ud-Dawa (the Preaching Society), but with the same leader. The new group runs conservative madrasahs and promotes an austere vision of Islam through preaching and social work, and, according to a spokesman, it has hundreds of thousands of members throughout Pakistan. Azad Kashmir had been an important base for Lashkar-e-Taiba, because the region offered sanctuary and a convenient launching ground for anti-India operations.

In Muzaffarabad, I found the main Jamaat ud-Dawa camp on the west bank of the Neelum River, in a part of the city that had been severely damaged. Mohammed Khalid, the youthful chief of the group's regional media committee, welcomed me into a tent strewn with carpets and cushions. He had a soft beard that fell far below his chin. Unlike the Army, the group had mobilized quickly after the quake, and I asked how it had done so. "We had a seminary here, with two hundred students, and a hospital," he said. "The hospital crumbled. We then dug out medicines, and doctors started working within thirty minutes." The students handed out food and set up a generator. "It was all darkness and dust," he said. "People saw the light and they started coming, and that was where our work really began." By now, Khalid said, Jamaat ud-Dawa had about three thousand volunteers throughout the area struck by the earthquake.

The camp in Muzaffarabad covered about ten acres. In one tent, doctors set broken bones, and in a metal shipping container with power delivered by a generator, surgeons from Karachi and Lahore had assembled an operating theatre with an oxygen machine and medical monitoring equipment. Altogether, Khalid said, his group had brought dozens of doctors to Azad Kashmir, and they were seeing between seven hundred and eight hundred patients a day. When I asked if it bothered him that the American government had branded his group, or its predecessor, a terrorist organization, he said, "If you accuse someone, that doesn't mean it's true. I would invite the American doctors and medical staff to come and join us. Our doors are open. . . . Any American kid or boy can come work with us. They are most welcome."

Later, we drove to the banks of the Neelum, where, beside an Army camp, Jamaat ud-Dawa had established a ferry service using motorized rubber rafts trucked in from the group's headquarters, in Lahore. Normally, the boats were used "basically for training purposes," one volunteer told me. He did not say whether this training was for guerrilla war or some other mission—fishing, perhaps. We stood on a cliff and watched young volunteers playfully race a raft between ferry runs, tossing up wide wakes. I asked if we could ride across. As we climbed on, our captain, a boy who appeared to be in his teens, handed us empty water jugs to use as flotation devices in case we capsized. Also aboard were two Austrian soldiers toting water-purification equipment for isolated villages on the other side. I asked if they knew who was giving them a ride. One answered yes, with a smile, but added that there was no other way across. On the opposite bank, dozens of villagers had gathered in another Jamaat ud-Dawa camp. Mohammed Sharif, an elder of a village several miles away, said that the group's volunteers had reached them three days after the quake, and that the Pakistani Army had never turned up. "They are very good to us," he said. "They did everything on their own."

The Jamaat ud-Dawa volunteers I met offered only mild criticism of Musharraf and the Army, merely wondering why it had been so slow to organize.

They said that they had been coöperating extensively with Pakistani troops in the relief work. Later, I asked an Army spokesman, Major Farooq Pirzada, if this was true, and he replied that all charity groups, foreign and Pakistani, were welcome in the earthquake zone. The Army coördinated with them to avoid duplication. "We're helping everyone," the Major said. "We're not stopping anyone."

Musharraf has said that as long as the jihadi groups concentrate on peaceful social work, he is prepared to tolerate them; at the same time, he says that he intends to keep a close watch on them. The earthquake-relief effort in Muzaffarabad has made plain Musharraf's dilemma, and has drawn together the two sides of his ungainly balancing act: his coöperation with the United States in fighting terrorism and his attempt to appease, or at least manage, Pakistani groups that the United States has identified as terrorists. Less than a mile from the main Jamaat ud-Dawa camp in the Azad Kashmir capital, the U.S. Army has erected a field hospital. American Humvees on break from chasing remnant Al Qaeda elements in Afghanistan were sharing Muzaffarabad's streets with ambulances from the Al Rashid Trust, a Pakistani charity whose funds were blocked by the Bush Administration in 2001 because of accusations that it aided Al Qaeda. Musharraf's political position has been perilous ever since the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, when he supported the United States; members of one group that Musharraf has singled out, Jaish e-Mohammed, attempted to assassinate him in December, 2003. The success of jihadi groups in providing earthquake relief have only strengthened their claims to legitimacy in Pakistan.

At Musharraf's invitation, soldiers and relief workers from European and NATO countries have also come to Azad Kashmir. Two months earlier, the region was a closed security zone, to which foreigners typically could not travel without an escort and a special permit. Now small crowds of local men gathered to watch with apparent admiration as female European soldiers shopped in their food stalls. Pakistan has unsuccessfully sought to turn the conflict into an international matter, with the United States and European powers directly involved, and helping to push for a settlement; at least temporarily, the outside world, thanks to the earthquake, has finally come to Kashmir.

For the Kashmiri victims, the earthquake is just another, unusually cruel chapter in a long narrative of suffering. A month after it struck, many in Muzaffarabad were still searching for the missing and trying to recover the dead. Along a road above the Neelum River one morning, I stopped before the ruins of what had been the Rizwan Public High School. According to a hand-painted sign hung by surviving administrators, fifty students and two teachers died there when the five-story building collapsed. Shoes, glass, metal rods, torn school papers, plastic chairs, and backpacks lay in a heap. All that remained standing was a sign, beside a small playground, on which a painted Tweety Bird smiled above an Urdu homily: "Dear children, those who are neat and clean are liked by everyone."

Near the school, in a tent set up to trace the missing, village men clutched photographs of relatives. A religious teacher from a distant village held a color passport photograph of his younger brother, a law clerk who had dressed for the picture in a blue suit. He had lived across the street in an apartment block that had fallen down a cliff.

I walked over and watched men pulling apart the metal and broken concrete slabs of the building's remains under a warm sun. Mohammed Sain, a white-bearded man in a soiled turban, said that eight of his relatives had lived in this building. So far, he had recovered one body, that of a brother who worked in town as a baker. "You have to remove the bodies on a self-help basis, because the Army isn't here," Sain said. "You dig for your own bodies, and then you carry them." At his side were two boys, brothers ten and twelve years old, one wearing a blue sweater, the other a red velvet shirt. He had brought them from their village, where their mother had been killed in the earthquake, to dig in the rubble for their missing father. ♦

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CASUAL

ABOVE THE LAW, BELOW THE BOX SPRINGS

BY WOODY ALLEN

Wilton's Creek lies at the center of the Great Plains, north of Shepherd's Grove, to the left of Dobb's Point, and just above the bluffs that form Planck's constant. The land is arable and is found primarily on the ground. Once a year, the swirling winds from the Kinna Hurrah rip through the open fields, lifting farmers from their work and depositing them hundreds of miles to the south, where they often resettle and open boutiques. On a gray Tuesday morning in June, Comfort Tobias, the Washburns' housekeeper, entered the Washburn home, as she has done each day for the past seventeen years. The fact that she was fired nine years ago has not stopped her coming to clean, and the Washburns value her more than ever since terminating her wages. Before working for the Washburns, Tobias was a horse whisperer at a ranch in Texas, but she suffered a nervous breakdown when a horse whispered back.

"What stunned me most," she recalls, "was that he knew my Social Security number."

When Comfort Tobias entered the Washburn house that Tuesday, the family was off on vacation. (They had stowed away on a cruise ship to the Greek islands, and although they'd hidden in barrels and done without food or water for three weeks, the Washburns did manage to sneak out on deck at 3 A.M. each night to play shuffleboard.) Tobias went upstairs to change a light bulb.

"Mrs. Washburn liked her light bulbs changed every Tuesday and Friday, whether they needed it or not," she explained. "She loved fresh light bulbs. The linens we did once a year."

The minute the housekeeper entered the master bedroom, she knew something was amiss. Then she saw it—she couldn't believe her eyes! Someone had been at the mattress and had cut off the tag that reads, "It is a violation of law to remove this tag, except by the consumer." Tobias shuddered. Her legs buckled and she felt sick. Something told her to look in the children's rooms and, sure enough, there, too, the tags had been removed from the mattresses. Now her blood froze as she saw a large shadow loom ominously across the wall. Her heart pounded and she wanted to scream. Then she recognized the shadow as her own, and, resolving to diet, phoned the police.

"I've never seen anything like it," Chief Homer Pugh said. "Things like this just don't go on in Wilton's Creek. Sure, one time somebody broke into the local bakery and sucked the jelly out of the doughnuts, but the third time it happened we had marksmen up on the roof and we shot him in the act."

"Why? Why?" sobbed Bonnie Beale, a neighbor of the Washburns. "So senseless, so cruel. What kind of world are we living in when someone other than the consumer cuts off the mattress tags?"

"Before this," Maude Figgins, the local schoolteacher, said, "when I'd go out I could always leave my mattresses home. Now whenever I leave my house, whether it's to go shopping or out to dinner, I'm taking all my mattresses along."

At midnight that evening, along the road to Amarillo, Texas, two people drove at high speed in a red Ford with fake license plates that looked real from a distance but on closer inspection were clearly made of marzipan. The driver had a tattoo on his right forearm that read, "Peace, Love, Decency." When he rolled up his left sleeve another tattoo appeared: "Printing Error—Disregard My Right Forearm."

Next to him was a young blond woman who might have been considered beautiful if she had not been a dead ringer for Abe Vigoda. The driver, Beau Stubbs, had recently escaped from San Quentin, where he had been incarcerated for littering. Stubbs was convicted of dropping a Snickers wrapper on the street, and the judge, claiming that he had showed no remorse, sentenced him to two consecutive life terms.

The woman, Doxy Nash, had been married to an undertaker and worked beside him. Stubbs had entered their funeral parlor one day, just to browse. Smitten, he tried to make flirtatious conversation with her, but she was too busy cremating someone. It wasn't long before Stubbs and Doxy Nash began having a secret affair, although soon she found out about it. Her undertaker husband, Wilbur, liked Stubbs and offered to bury him gratis if he would agree to have it done that day. Stubbs knocked him unconscious and ran away with his wife but not before substituting a rubber blow-up doll in her place. One evening, after three of the happiest years of Wilbur Nash's life, he became suspicious when he asked his wife for more chicken and she suddenly popped and flew around the room in ever-diminishing circles, coming to rest on the carpet.

Homer Pugh stands five-eight in his stocking feet, which he keeps in a large duffelbag along with his actual feet. Pugh has been a policeman as far back as he can remember. His father was a notorious bank robber and the only way Pugh could get to spend time with him was to apprehend him. Pugh arrested his father on nine occasions, and values their conversations, although many took place while the two men were exchanging gunfire.

I asked Pugh what he made of the situation.

"My theory?" Pugh said. "'Two drifters, off to see the world—'" Soon he was singing "Moon River" while his wife, Ann, served drinks, and I was given a fifty-six-dollar tab. Just then the phone rang, and Pugh pounced on it. The voice at the other end came across the room with deep resonance.

"Homer?"

"Willard," Pugh said. It was Willard Boggs—Trooper Boggs of the Amarillo State Police. The State Police in Amarillo are a crackerjack group, and members not only must be physically impressive but must pass a rigorous written exam. Boggs had failed the written test twice, first being unable to explicate Wittgenstein to the desk sergeant's satisfaction, then mistranslating Ovid. It was a mark of his dedication that Boggs received tutoring, and his final thesis on Jane Austen remains a classic among the motorcycle police who patrol Amarillo's highways.

"We got our eye on a couple," he told Chief Pugh. "Very suspicious behavior."

"Like what?" Pugh asked, lighting yet another cigarette. Pugh is aware of the health hazards of smoking and so uses only chocolate cigarettes. When he lights the tips, the chocolate melts on his trousers, giving him enormous cleaning bills on a policeman's salary.

"Couple came into a fancy restaurant here," Boggs continued. "Ordered a big barbeque dinner, wine, all the trimmings. Ran up a whopping check and tried paying with mattress tags."

"Pick 'em up," Pugh said. "Bring 'em in but don't tell anybody what the charge is. Say they fit the description of two people we want for questioning about fondling a hen."

The state law on removing the tag of a mattress that does not belong to you goes back to the early nineteen-hundreds, when Asa Chones engaged in a quarrel with his neighbor over a pig that had wandered into the neighbor's yard. The two men fought over possession of the pig for several hours, until Chones realized that it was not a pig at all but his wife. The matter was adjudicated by the town elders, who ruled that Chones's wife's features were sufficiently porcine to justify the mistake. In a fit of rage, Chones entered the neighbor's home that night and tore off all the man's mattress tags. He was apprehended and stood trial. The mattress minus the tag, reasoned the court verdict, "insults the integrity of the stuffing."

At first Nash and Stubbs maintained their innocence, claiming to be a ventriloquist and puppet. By 2 A.M. both suspects had begun to crack under Pugh's relentless interrogation, which was cleverly done in French, a language they did not know, and hence could not easily lie in. Finally, Stubbs confessed.

"We pulled up in front of the Washburn house in the moonlight," he said. "We knew the front door was always left open, but we broke in just to keep in practice. Doxy turned all the Washburn family photos to the wall so there wouldn't be any witnesses. I'd heard about the Washburns in prison from Wade Mullaway, a serial killer who dismembered his victims and ate them. He'd worked as a chef for the Washburns but was let go when they found a nose in their soufflé. I knew it was not only illegal but a crime against God to remove tags from mattresses where I was not the consumer but I kept hearing this voice telling me to do it. If I'm not mistaken it was Walter Cronkite. I cut the Washburns' tag, Doxy did the kids' mattresses. I was sweating—the room was blurry—my whole childhood passed before my eyes, then another kid's childhood, and finally the childhood of the Nizam of Hyderabad."

At the trial Stubbs chose to act as his own lawyer, but a conflict over his fee led to ill feelings. I visited Beau Stubbs on Death Row, where numerous appeals kept him from the gallows for a decade, in which time he used prison to learn a trade and became a highly skilled airline pilot. I was present when the final sentence was carried out. A great sum of money was paid to Stubbs by Nike for the television rights, allowing the company to put its logo on the front of his black hood. Whether the death penalty acts as a deterrent remains questionable, although studies show that the odds of criminals committing another crime drops by almost half after their execution. ♦

From the Crisfield (Md.) Times.

One hundred years ago, Chesapeake Bay swarmed with 1,000 unique vessels. They were called Skipjacks, powered by the wind and used to harvest as many as ten million oysters in a single season. The harvest today has fallen to less than one-tenth of that. And the Skipjack is almost extinct, with no more than 10 still used in dredging four oysters.

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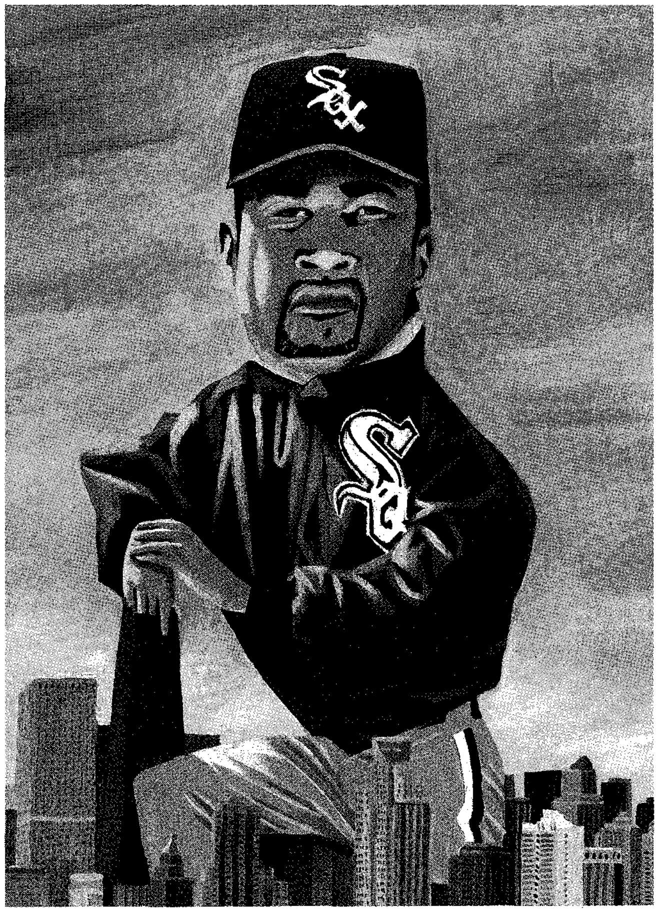
THE SPORTING SCENE

THE LATE SHOW

The other Sox win a Series for Chicago.

BY ROGER ANGELL

Baseball is off on its annual winter cruise, basking in better weather and no pauses for commercials. "Small ball" has gone away, too, along with Craig Biggio's dirt-smudged helmet, Red Sox Nation, and the speculation about Roger Clemens's mother's deathbed references to Shoeless Joe Jackson. The 2005 season will be replayed every day on the south side of Chicago, including Christmas and Easter, now that the astounding White Sox have won the championship, their first since 1917, while the rest of us make do with briefer recapitulations. What first comes back to mind here is not a play or a strikeout but a noise: the flat, room-filling *whock!* or *Whock-k-k!* of the top-of-the-ninth, three-run homer struck by the Cardinals' Albert Pujols against the Astros' closer, Brad Lidge, in the fifth game of the National League championship, at Minute Maid Park, in Houston. The blow came with the Cardinals trailing by 4–2 and one out away from elimination. By extending things—the Astros did nothing in their half of the inning—it provided one more day of baseball at the Cards' home field, Busch Stadium, the last of the old cyclotron ballparks, which was scheduled for demolition at the end of the season. The reprieve was brief, with the Cards giving way, 5–1, in the renewal, two days later, thus continuing the post-season vapors that afflicted them during the four-game World Series sweep by the Red Sox last year. Day to day, the Cardinals have been the best team in baseball for two years, with two hundred and five cumulative wins, but that structure, too, has gone to dust.



Kisses and great pitching put manager Ozzie Guillen on top.

MARK ULRIKSEN

Back to the bang. I have been witness to some collectible blasts down the years, including Carlton Fisk's Game Six twelfth-inning shot against the Reds at Fenway Park in 1975; Reggie Jackson's third consecutive dinger against the Dodgers at Yankee Stadium—this one into the faraway black seats—in the sixth game of the 1977 World Series; and, for that matter, a few echoing afternoon homers from my youth by the likes of Jimmie Foxx, Lou Gehrig, and the Babe. Pujols's shot meant nothing in the end but will remain in the Hall of Knocks, I believe, for its purity. Only twenty-five, Pujols has hit more than thirty homers and driven in more than a hundred runs in each of his first five years in the majors—no one else in the annals has begun a career better—and is the name you begin to look for in your scorecard again an inning or two before his next turn at bat. His spot in the Cards' ninth would come five batters away—a remote chance after Lidge, a dominating closer, had fanned the first two Cardinal batters. David Eckstein managed a single here, however, and Lidge, who had been envisioning Pujols with bat in hand right along, walked Jim Edmonds. His second pitch to Pujols produced the embronzing moment—the explosion and then the batter and the pitcher with their heads lifted and eyes fixed upon the same distant speck. The ball, as best I could see on my screen and in replay, sustained a perfect departing line until it encountered the top of the wall behind the left-field stands or perhaps part of the roof structure up there. Whenever this sort of dead-center smack comes along, photographs make the batter look like a dockhand or an old-fashioned tug-o'-war athlete heaving on a cable. Our semi-embarrassed, post-"Wow!" laughter at these moments feels like something from childhood: the most we can imagine has just come true.

Another mid-game flash from this post-season has implanted itself in my mind, much as I wish it gone: the terrifying collision between Yankee center fielder Bubba Crosby and right fielder Gary Sheffield at Angel Stadium that did away with the Yankees' chances and ended their brilliant late run through September and into the playoffs. This fell in the second inning of the deciding game of the Yankees-Los Angeles Angels divisional series, and delivered the tying and go-ahead runs in the Angels' eventual 5–3 victory. This matchup looked like the best series of the three-level playoffs this year, and the crash destroyed the tension of the games and the sense that the Yanks, who had trailed in the short series, were now in the part of the year they knew best and would reasonably expect to prolong. They struggled in the game, with Hideki Matsui and Alex Rodriguez unable to break out of near-paralytic slumps, and Bernie Williams, in what may have been the last game of his fifteen years as a Yankee, seeming to blow a hit-and-run sign in the midst of their early chance at a big number. Here in the bottom of that second inning, Yankee starter Mike Mussina, up by 2–0 at the outset, had already given up a homer and a single and a two-out walk, when Adam Kennedy's drive toward the right-center-field wall came down at a point equidistant between the onrushing outfielders, who flew together, then disjointedly apart as the ball popped free. Neither one could hear the other's call in the home-crowd din or take his eyes off the high, difficult chance. Amazingly, neither was much hurt and both stayed on in the game. The Yankees, who had seen three of their expensive starting pitchers on the disabled list at one time or another in a hard season, did not survive this last blow. "I can't remember being this disappointed," Joe Torre said afterward.

The pain of the loss and the sullen, whispery air of anger and retribution that hangs around the Yankees whenever they've failed to win another World Championship went away a little in late October, when Torre announced that he would stay on for the last two years of his three-year contract, and Brian Cashman, the maker of this particular club, reported in turn that he would come back as general manager, with more money and a promise of less meddling from the Tampa branch of the Steinbrenner empire. We'll see. Yankee haters and radio call-in complainers keep pointing to the team's enormous, two-hundred-and-six-million-dollar payroll and fifth straight failure to win a championship, but this hard, bottom-line sort of reaction, born of George Steinbrenner's view of baseball, runs counter to the vagaries of major-league competition, which defy certainty. All of us in New York buy into this tainted contract to some degree, even as we sense how it distorts the significance of each Yankee loss and diminishes the victories, including the ultimate one.

One need only look across town to encounter the other kind of baseball attachment in the easy joys and dashed hopes of the Mets fans, who are watching another coming team, built by general manager Omar Minaya around the new manager, Willie Randolph, and a genuine new star, third baseman David Wright. Wright hits often and with power, but may become best known for his defense. His startling, full-sprint barehanded grab of a Brian Giles looper, on a play behind third base in August, was in the Willie Mays mode. My own model fans this year were the Shea Stadium family seated just to my right at a Sunday-afternoon Mets-Cardinals game in May: a smiling young mother, a large young father, and a four-month-old baby, each deeply swathed in Mets-gear. She had on a new candy-striped "WRIGHT" uniform shirt, notably brighter than his faded "PIAZZA" top, and though I couldn't determine the infant's particular hero, inside her Snugli, her protruding feet wore blue-and-orange Metsocks. With each Met hit or blasting between-inning rock-music selection, Dad held the placid fanlet aloft and bounced her up and down in the direction of the noise. Somebody won—I think it was the Cards—but coming home it was the day we remembered, not the standings.

Not much can be said here to succor Red Sox fans, whose forever-awaited time of glory lasted just one year. Their defending champs occupied the top floor of the American League East for most of the distance, but without the wild joys of the previous summer; it was like the third act of "La Bohème." Pedro had gone away; Curt Schilling was still undergoing repairs to his bad ankle; and Johnny Damon, while converting to a rock-star style and status, had a sad falloff at the plate. Big Papi Ortiz, in an M.V.P. sort of year as designated hitter, could not quite pull it all together. The Sox qualified as the wild card once again, on the very last day of the season, but were swept by the Other Sox in the divisionals. Now without their young general manager, Theo Epstein, who unexpectedly left the club after difficulties over his contract renewal, the Bosox are not just deposed but ancient. They may not get to play in October next time.

Roger Clemens, who is forty-three, toured enemy ballparks this summer as a baseball god, accepting waves of applause from the other teams' fans, and not allowing a single run on the

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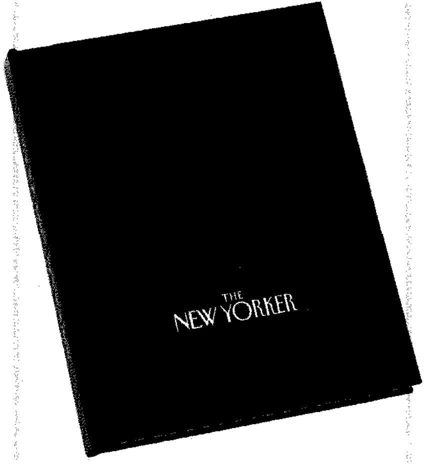

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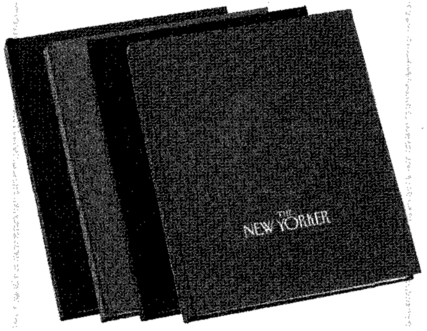

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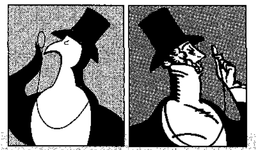

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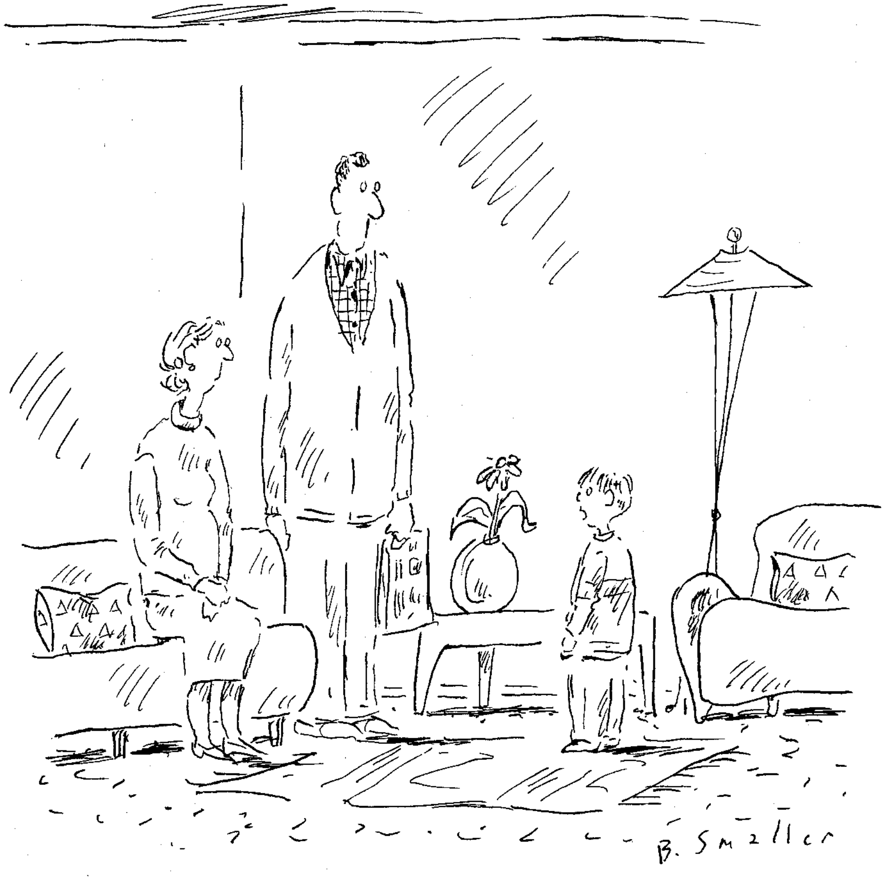
road until the end of June. In his second year with his home-town Houston Astros and twenty-second in the show, he went 13–8 and struck out a hundred and eighty-five batters while compiling a 1.87 earned-run average, which was the best in the league. Before his sag-off in the last six weeks, he appeared likely to pick up his eighth Cy Young Award—an unnecessary certificate, perhaps, since he is now popularly if not universally considered the best pitcher ever. I will miss him if he retires at last now—retires for good, I mean—as appears likely, but feel that I have paid him full homage and attention, and waited around for enough mysterioso interviews.

Greatness confirmed is all very well, but the outsized figure who held my attention this summer was Jason Giambi, whose early struggles at the plate made you want to be elsewhere. He'd come off a .208 season last year, after suffering a parasitic intestinal infection (perhaps picked up at the Yankees' season-opening series in Japan) and then a tumor of the pituitary gland—and, just as bad in its way, an attack on his reputation after his name came up on the list of players involved in the BALCO laboratory's distribution of steroids. Much was expected of him now, but those vacuous trips to the plate—awkward, stabbing flails and then another pop-up or wild strikeout or hopping ground ball—would be followed by punishing trips back to the dugout, his pale, strange eyes empty as the boos showered down. He was batting .195 after twenty-seven games, with three home runs. He managed a lone home run in May and another in June. The Yankees offered a trip to the minors, where he could work on his swing in a less claustrophobic setting, but he refused, citing a basic contract right as an older player. The turnabout was Hobbesian: a .355 month of July, with fourteen home runs, a Player of the Month award in his league, and a Comeback Player of the Year award at the end. I recall him in a July game against the Orioles, when he rapped a home run in the second, a first-pitch double in the next inning, and another double in the sixth—after which Torre removed him, for the ovation. Giambi could barely wait to get into the batter's box now, and his hits seemed missionary. As Torre put it, bat speed comes from conviction.

Giambi's comeback meant a lot to me, because he'd been among the castaways of the steroids mess. His degradation on the field was connected in many minds with his presumed steroid use while he was hitting cannonading shots (and winning a Most Valuable Player award in 2000) for the Oakland Athletics. He'd let us down, this thinking went, and whatever pain or punishment that came his way was of his own making. The steroids scandal clouded the early season, but as the weeks went along a sense of order appeared to return to the game, brought about by a more stringent Major League testing program, which has imposed mandatory ten-game suspensions on twelve major leaguers so far, including the potential Hall of Famer Rafael Palmeiro, who'd testified to his own purity at the House hearings in March.

Perhaps other fans were as disgusted as I was by that Washington sideshow, with its "Crucible" pieties and invitations to the celebrity witnesses to abase or perjure themselves and rat out their teammates. Try as I may, I can't summon up much anger over the players' perfidy, which is surely a natural result of our insatiable wish for monster home runs, endless records, and a pennant for our home club. Shorter outfields, a shrivelled strike zone, and grossly inflated salaries have followed, along with the realization that some players, in sight of great rewards, will do almost anything to perform up to our expectations. Nor can I believe that players back in the sanctified pre-steroids era, relying as they did upon booze and cigarettes and greenies to carry them through the long season, would have pulled back in horror at the first proffered stab in the rump from a Canseco of that time. There's been widespread shock that all this reality should have come clanking down upon sweet old baseball, but non-fans, I've noticed, find this hard to understand. When I was talking about the steroid hearings with a smart, sports-nerdy friend of mine, his face lit up. "Hey," he said, "do you suppose Max Planck was on some-



"It's not that I don't want a baby brother—it's just that this is a bad time for me developmentally."

thing the day he came up with the quantum theory? Does that disqualify him?"

The World Series and its prior eliminations, compressed here to the consistency of a PowerBar, will not engage us for long. Pitching and defense prevailed for most of the games, some of which, like the eighteen-inning, near-six-hour 7–6 Houston win over the Braves, became a test of character—No more! I confess! Call in the stenographer!—for the drooping audiences at home. With runs at a premium, the umpires became larger figures in the drama, and more than once proved unready for the part. In Chicago, with two out and the Angels and the White Sox tied at 1–1 in the bottom of the ninth of the second American League Championship Series game, the Pale Hose batter, A. J. Pierzynski, swung and missed at a diving pitch, which the catcher, Josh Paul, caught at or just above the dirt. Up went ump Doug Eddings's fist for the out as Paul rolled the ball toward the mound and headed for the dugout: inning over—except that Pierzynski, looking back, took off for first base in vivid imitation of an untagged third-out baserunner. Had the ball hit the ground before Paul nabbed it? Well, uh, maybe, the ump now ruled, and summoned the players back onto the field. What happened next—a stolen base by a pinch-runner inserted for Pierzynski, and a game-winning, walk-off double to left by the Sox' third baseman, Joe Crede—drew less space in the next day's coverage than the umpire's waverings.

I couldn't remember anything of this sort since a similar Marbury v. Madison legal set-to that followed a batter's-interference incidence in the 1975 World Series. My own brief here avers (a) Plaintiff catcher Paul should have tagged the runner, citing the well-established Just in Case precedent; and (b) Crew Chief Jerry Crawford, on consultation with his bench brethren, should have overruled Eddings on the original, if demurred and withdrawn, upraised-fist ruling, admitting though not supporting a post-hoc deposition by Eddings: "Sometimes the things you see and sometimes the things you realize, you question yourself."

An admirable figure in the gigantic mishmash was Angels manager Mike Scioscia, who, with a miserable face, said in the postgame that the Angels hadn't played well enough to make the call worth carrying on about. Onward and downward. With the series now tied, the teams went off to California, where the Angels lost the next three and the pennant.

Among managers, Ozzie Guillen, the White Sox' pilot, is the opposite of the closed-mouthed norm, presenting a sharky, half-open jaw and an eagerness for free speech. Earlier this year, he described a departed outfielder of his, Magglio Ordoñez, as "another Venezuelan piece of shit"—not an absolute slur, since he himself is Venezuelan. Guillen, who is forty-one, put in thirteen years at short for the White Sox and holds membership in the élite company of All-Star Venezuelan shortstops, which includes Luis Aparicio, a Hall of Famer, and the legendary Chico Carrasquel, Dave Concepcion, and Omar Vizquel. Guillen was hired as manager two years ago, after a three-year coaching tenure with the Expos and the Marlins. Last winter, he and general manager Ken Williams persuaded Sox owner Jerry Reinsdorf not to re-sign Ordoñez and to trade away another slugging outfielder, Carlos Lee, and thus perhaps break the Sox' ancient predilection for home runs and second-place finishes. No power would mean a regimen of taut defense behind strong pitching, plus opportunistic hitting: a deal that Ozzie's burning confidence could sell to his players—who went off like greyhounds on opening day and were never behind in their division.

Giving away power is a radical idea in modern baseball, but Guillen's maneuver with his pitchers during the American League Championship Series was Bolshevik. After calling in a lefty, Neal Cotts, from the bullpen to collect the last two outs in the Sox' opening-game, 3–2 loss to the Angels, Guillen allowed his next four starters—Mark Buehrle, Jon Garland, Freddy Garcia, and Jose Contreras—to go the full distance: thirty-six innings, four complete games, four wins, and a ticket to the World Series. This had not been done in the post-season since the Yankees' 1956 World Series, an ice age before the six-innings-and-out conventions of modern-day ball. Guillen had a strong bullpen and two closers at his disposal, and would have been boiled in oil if his restraint had cost him a game. As it was, the idea of the Sox' pitching probably imposed itself deeply into the minds of the Houston batters, and had a part in their team's brusque dismissal.

The Roger Clemens who opened the series in Chicago for the Astros appeared worn by his long season and accumulated hurts, and struck out one batter in the course of an arduous two innings. He left, down 3–1, after fifty-four pitches. His teammates took the Rocket off the hook, retying the game in the next frame, but the Sox went ahead in the fourth and did not trail again on this dank and chilly evening. Their starter, Contreras, showed more pluck and variety than I'd recalled from his days with the Yankees, and third baseman Crede, as if wishing to get the elderly Cubano in out of the cold, contributed a home run and two top-drawer stops in the field to the 5–3 win. Guillen's relief corps, at last given employment, produced Cotts in the eighth, who struck out a pair, and then the massive, twenty-four-year-old Bobby Jenks—Guillen, making the sign, mimed a boxcar—who threw pitches that touched a hundred miles an hour on the gun, and closed.

It was wetter and colder the next night, down in the low forties at game time, with the lights at U.S. Cellular Field gleaming off the fans' igloolike plastic sheathings. The Astros, compiling a dogged 4–2 margin behind Andy Pettitte (this was his eleventh World Series game), had to hand over the work to lesser help by the seventh, producing the fireballer Chad Qualls, whose bases-loaded first pitch to first baseman Paul Konerko was knocked over the fence. Konerko's swing looked easy and silken, but afterward he sounded apologetic about the slam. "He threw it exactly where I was looking," he said. "It's the last thing on your mind."

Many fans watching at home took the turnaround blow as a signal to click off their sets, and missed the thrilling compressed drama that quickly came after: a pinch-hit mid-rally Astros' single, with two out in the ninth, brought in the catch-up runs; the trailing runner,

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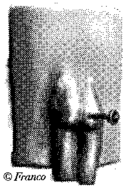

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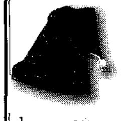

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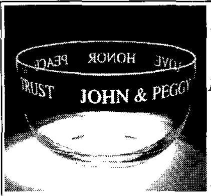

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Chris Burke, slipped his hand under the catcher's tag and across the plate like a Cartier jewel thief as he flew by, keeping the game alive and setting off fervent though brief celebrations in the visitors' dugout. Minutes later—it seemed like seconds—the second batter in the bottom of the inning, Sox outfielder Scott Podsednik, sailed the fourth pitch into the right-center-field stands for the walk-off. The Houston pitcher and victim was Brad Lidge—the very same Lidge who'd given up the epochal Pujols blow. Tim McCarver and Joe Buck, the veteran Fox duo, were discussing whether Lidge still had the taste of Pujols in his mouth and had just agreed that no, an experienced closer wouldn't think that way. Lidge pitched, Podsednik swung, and Tim said, "The taste might be there now!"

Houston fans who had waited forty-four years for the first World Series game ever played in Texas could not have known that it would turn out to be an Ambien. I enjoyed their "Killer Bees" regalia—striped yellow-and-black sweaters, Deeley Bopper antennae, and even some beehive-hairdo wigs here and there—and shared admiration for their eponymous heroes Craig Biggio (with his aged kid's face under the big helmet), Jeff Bagwell (now reduced to a pinch-hitter, with his uptilted swing sadly cramped by injury), and Lance Berkman (who brings burning intelligence to bear upon each pitch) but could not, as their signs implored, "BELIEVE!" Their starter here, Roy Oswalt, presents an engaging down-home skinniness and devastating stuff low in the strike zone—live at the knees, in the parlance. He had allowed one run while striking out six batters in each of his two L.C.S. wins, and it was riveting to see the White Sox batters begin to wait and watch and adjust their swings as they worked on this fresh problem. Oswalt, ahead by 4–0 in the fifth, gave up a quick homer to Crede, then fell victim (with a strikeout along the way) to four successive eroding, pitch-consuming singles. The last of these, by Jermaine Dye, came on another extended at-bat, with Dye two times avoiding extinction by last-instant fouls. The replay camera brought a closeup of Dye, his face contorted, flinching away from a ninety-m.p.h.-plus inside pitch and at the same moment slashing his bat at the ball and flicking it away. His hit—he had bent double to get the end of the bat on a slider off the outside corner—was a miserable little bloop, but it drove in the third run of the inning and took the noise and air out of the park. Pierzynski, two batters later, hit a two-run double, and the White Sox were ahead, 5–4. It was the worst inning of Oswalt's career.

His team brought in a tying run in the eighth—their last of the year, it turned out—though it required a grotesque, Series-record five hours and forty-one minutes for the Astros to lose this game, 7–5, to a Chicago homer (not off Lidge) by a benchwarmer and a bases-loaded walk in the fourteenth. "That's some pretty poor, absolute rotten hitting," Astros manager Phil Garner exclaimed. "I'm really ticked off. I'm ticked off because we're not hitting well." He paused as if in search of a nastier verb, but gave it up. He is the son of a minister and closed away from Ozzie's options.

The finale, which went scoreless through seven innings, was taut but flat, thanks to Houston's catatonia at the plate. The Astros actually had the better chances for most of the evening but eleven times failed to deliver a base runner in scoring position. For a fan, repeated action like this brings out the level of response felt by a dentist's patient watching a pigeon fly past the window. This Houston team, which qualified as a wild card on the last day on the schedule, had plenty of front-line pitching but had sputtered and wheezed all year for lack of runs; now the tank was empty. The White Sox brought home the needed run in the eighth, in classic style: a pinch-hit single, a sacrifice bunt, an infield out, and Dye's single—he clapped his hands, running up the line—tapped against, who else, Brad Lidge.

I looked for Ozzie Guillen in the celebrations, because, like the rest of America, I'd been charmed by his impulsive way of kissing his players when they came off the field after a big win. Two games back, during the hugging and jumping around after Podsednik's walk-off home run, you could see him holding Bobby Jenks's face in both hands, inches away, while he stared into his eyes; Jenks was cast down after he'd allowed the tying runs, a few minutes before, and Ozzie was telling him he was still his baby, still the man. Now Jenks had pitched one more time and picked up the last save.

By the end, I'd begun to care about the White Sox and tuck away some of their identifying touches: Pierzynski's turned-around catcher's helmet, tipped down to his eyebrows like a street kid's cap; Carl Everett's odd blinks and stares as he faced the pitcher, propping his chin above his shoulder; the sprigs of hair sticking out from under Joe Crede's cap, and his great sweeping stroke on the ball; and Jermaine Dye's new cool and patience. He was the Oakland A's batter who, in a 2001 playoff against the Yankees, broke his leg on a foul when the ball flew down and struck him on the shin. Now he had a World Series M.V.P. Crede, who is lean and tall, is in his third full year in the majors, and may be about to step up to a much higher level in the game.

The Series was a bust for the network, garnering a lowest-ever 11 rating, but the Sox' clear joy at their own accomplishment—they could barely believe themselves—and their complex semi-anonymity still feel refreshing. In a time when African-Americans are deserting the game, they are the exception, a racially diverse operation, numbering among others an African-American general manager (Ken Williams), a South American Hispanic manager, a Japanese second baseman, and the revered black Sox alumni Tim Raines and Harold Baines, who now serve as coaches. This is all by plan, and is the work of Jerry Reinsdorf (he also owns the Chicago Bulls), a notorious hard rock in baseball's labor wars, who turns out to be pure caramel. He had flown two planeloads of Sox office personnel down to Houston for the games, including the interns, and he was teary at the end. His team's seventy-five-million-dollar payroll is just above the median, and the staunch, star-free roster didn't have a single batter who finished over .300 this season, and only one, Paul Konerko, who drove in a hundred runs. Over the last three weeks of action, these White Sox had played at the outer limits of their abilities, exhorting themselves to stay tough in the field and patient at bat. The Astros, despite their failures at the plate, were no pushovers, and the Series games, which were settled by a total of six runs, stayed close and harsh. The Sox' grand run of wins at the end—they went sixteen and one, beginning with a five-game streak at the end of the season—should calm our sour plaints about money and the tilted playing field and the tainted atmosphere of contemporary sports, at least for a day or two. Locally, they were a smash hit, for once utterly extinguishing the Cubs and the Cubs' mystique, but they also encouraged the rest of us to forget the sullen imperatives of the Yankees, and perhaps the histrionics of the Red Sox as well—the C. of the B. and the Idiots and those dirty uniforms—while we take a little hope in baseball. Kisses all around. ♦

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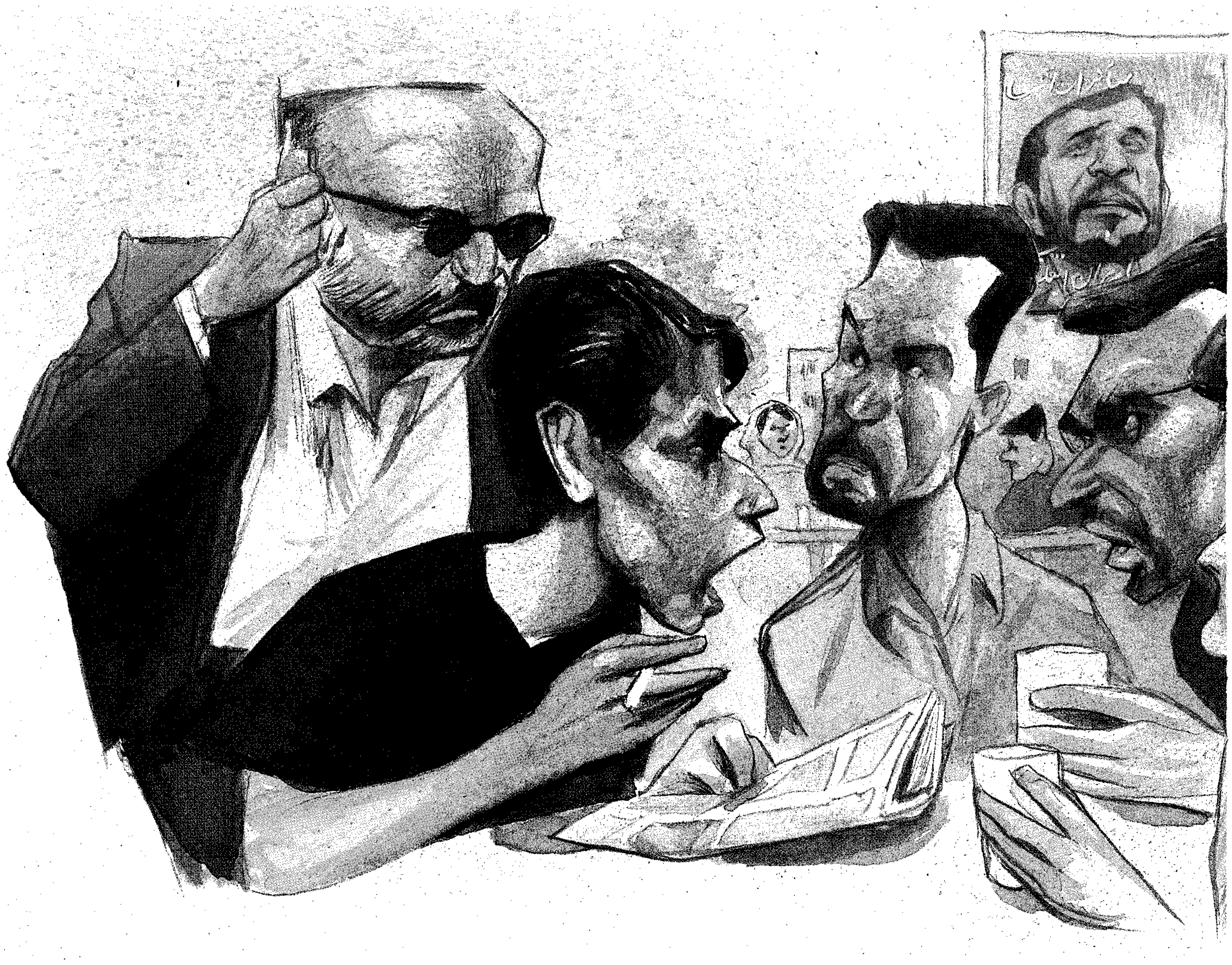


A REPORTER AT LARGE

FUGITIVES

Young Iranians confront the collapse of the reform movement.

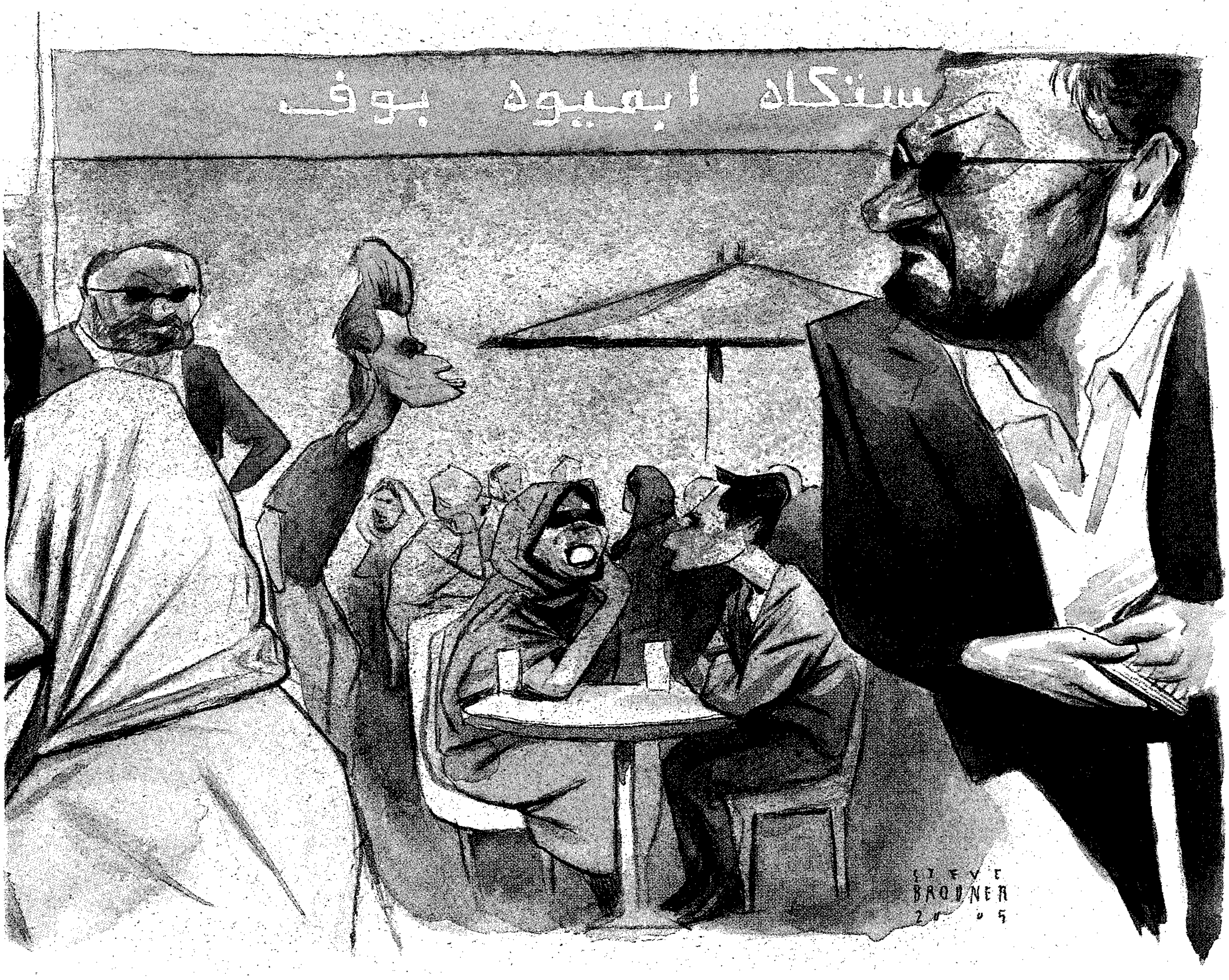
BY LAURA SECOR

One afternoon in June, three days before Iran's Presidential elections, thousands of young reformists gathered in Tehran University's soccer stadium. Their candidate, Mustafa Moin, was sure to lose, but the crowd was jubilantly defiant. "Free the political prisoners!" people shouted, in a country where citizens are often afraid to speak openly on their private telephones. "Democracy and freedom are on the way!"

Saeed Hajjarian approached a podium that was covered in Persian carpets. The crowd broke into applause. Hajjarian had once been an Islamic revolutionary and a top intelligence-ministry official, but as Iran's autocratic regime hardened he had grown more liberal, becoming a key architect of the reform movement, which rose to prominence in 1997. That year, Hajjarian had helped secure the election of Mohammad Khatami, whose two-term Presidency was now ending. In the late nineteen-nineties, a string of Iranian dissidents were mysteriously murdered, and a few journalists linked those murders to the intelligence ministry, which was still controlled by hardliners; Hajjarian's adversaries, fearing the extent of his knowledge of the regime's inner workings, presumed that he was the journalists' informant. In March, 2000, Hajjarian was shot in the face outside Tehran's city council. He survived a long coma but awoke paralyzed. He recently started to walk again.

As Hajjarian prepared to speak, a chant rose from the crowd: "Down with political assassination!" Hajjarian implored the crowd to remember Akbar Ganji—a dissident journalist who was in prison, on an extended hunger strike—and others "who can't be here because they are in prison or in Heaven." The

STEVE BRODNER



crowd whistled in approval. In the distance, behind the city's veil of smog, were the austere peaks of the Elburz Mountains, which loom over Tehran, a Middle Eastern Los Angeles of low-lying sprawl and traffic-choked boulevards.

I sat on the soccer field, behind a bale of folded carpets. Two boys of eleven or twelve, who wore headbands with campaign slogans in their gelled hair, flung themselves, belly first, onto the rugs, laughing. On either side of the podium were vertical banners with images of Moin—a gray-haired man with a narrow face and an expression of kindly intelligence. Moin had been the country's minister of higher education in 1999, when, at Tehran University, Iranian security forces attacked students who were protesting the closure of a newspaper; several students were killed and dozens wounded. In protest, Moin offered his resignation. President Khatami, however, had been nearly silent—an act of submission that left many young Iranians cynical about the reform movement.

After Hajjarian finished speaking, a pop band took the stage. "The song I'm going to sing is against fascist dictatorship, assassination, and torture," the singer announced. "It's dedicated to Akbar Ganji and Saeed Hajjarian." In the bleachers, a man in a blue short-sleeved shirt, with an Iranian flag tied around his head, swung his arms extravagantly above him, clapping to the music.

I left the rally as dusk fell. The streets surrounding the stadium were packed with police and members of the Revolutionary Guard Corps—the regime's paramilitary force. The guards, in dark-green fatigues, were armed, and policemen stood near parked vehicles filled with riot gear.

An Iranian friend once told me, "We have freedom of expression. We just don't have freedom *after* expression."

The eight years of Mohammad Khatami's Presidency created an illusion of openness in Iran. The country's stringent social codes gradually relaxed. Young men and women could mix almost freely; women's head scarves inched backward; chadors and loose black cloaks gave way to close-fitting, colorful manteaus. Dozens of newspapers opened, and activists demonstrated in the streets and on campuses to make demands of a President they thought was accountable to them.

Though Khatami had been elected in a landslide, he and reformist members of parliament were stymied by the overweening power of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who

Dissidents, reformists, and student activists in Iran have grown accustomed to nearly constant surveillance and threats.

"*Finally, the cat's away, and I get stuck with the Davidson account.*"

• •

controls the country's security forces and judiciary, and can effectively overrule the decisions of elected officials. The Guardian Council, an appointed twelve-member body close to Khamenei, vetoed a hundred and eleven of the two hundred and ninety-seven bills that Khatami endorsed as President. Meanwhile, from 1999 through 2004, the clerical establishment closed more than a hundred newspapers and magazines, and hundreds of student activists and journalists were imprisoned, often under terrible conditions. The rules of Iranian public discourse have remained fixed and unforgiving: you cannot criticize the Supreme Leader, the clergy, or the judiciary. The government frequently circulates a list of specific "red-lined," or forbidden, subjects to the country's media.

Iran's reform movement, for all its courage, was the loyal opposition in a fascist state. It sought not to dismantle or secularize the Islamic Republic—which was established in 1979—but to improve it. Khatami and other politicians drew on the work of Iranian philosophers who made painstaking theological arguments for incorporating human rights and democratic freedoms into an Islamic framework. These thinkers also questioned the doctrine of Velayat-e Faqih, established by Ayatollah Khomeini after the Islamic revolution, which decreed that a Shiite cleric, a Supreme Leader, must oversee the country. Khatami and other reformist politicians accepted that the state rested on two unequal pillars: one clerical, the other republican. But they believed that by taking hold of the republican elements of the state the people could chip away at authoritarianism. They articulated their strategy as one of applying pressure from below and negotiating at the top. And there were some improvements. Khatami appointed moderates to run the ministries, which make decisions that reach deep into Iranians' daily lives. As the reformist intellectual Saeed Laylaz told me when I visited Iran in October, 2004, "Ten years ago, if you were in opposition to the government, they killed you. Now they just make some legal trouble for you."

Nevertheless, by that fall the reformist project was widely perceived to be foundering. The reformists had lost control of parliament, in part because clerics had disqualified forty-four per cent of the prospective candidates, most of them reformists. And many of Khatami's young supporters felt betrayed, believing that their loyalty had merely burnished the image of a repressive regime. As Khatami prepared to leave office, Iran's largest student groups announced a boycott of the June election—virtually guaranteeing that Moin, Khatami's heir apparent, would lose.

Mohammad Ali Abtahi, a reformist cleric who served as Vice-President under Khatami, told me that he understood why Iran's young people were frustrated with his movement. "We disagreed with closing the newspapers, but the government closed most of them," he said. "We disagreed with arresting political dissidents, but they did it anyway. This is the truth about Iran. Given the situation of our society, I don't think that our movement was slow. But the society expected more."

The night that Iran's first-round Presidential-election results were announced, I had dinner at the home of Roozbeh Mirebrahimi. He lived on the south side of Tehran, in a warren of residential alleys where modest storefronts cast wide rectangles of yellow light onto the narrow streets. A twenty-six-year-old with a trimmed goatee, Mirebrahimi is one of many defiant Iranian newspaper reporters who have started blogs to circumvent the state censors. Last fall, during a crackdown on Internet postings, he was imprisoned for two months. After the serial assassinations of the late nineteen-nineties, Khatami had purged a number of hard-line officials from the intelligence ministry, but these agents began working in secret with members of the Islamic judiciary, running a network of shadow prisons. Mirebrahimi was held in one of these prisons; its precise location remains a mystery to him, because he was driven there blindfolded.

Mirebrahimi and his wife, Solmaz Sharif, who is also a reporter, shared a cramped apartment. A glass-fronted corner cabinet displayed a collection of wineglasses and figurines; blue-and-white plates hung on a wall. An enormous wedding photograph in a gilt frame loomed over the two facing couches that crowded the living room. I studied the photograph for some time. Mirebrahimi, slight and black-haired, with a bright, shy gaze, wore a red flower in his lapel. Sharif gripped his shoulder. She is twenty-three, round-faced, with full lips and dark eyes. She, too, has taken to blogging. She calls her site Fararee—"a fugitive act." When I asked her what she was fleeing, she said, "Everything."

When I arrived, Mirebrahimi shared some news: Moin had lost. In the second round of the election, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who had been Iran's President between 1989 and 1997, would face Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the mayor of Tehran—a little-known politician with roots in the country's volunteer Islamic militia, and an ardent supporter of the Supreme Leader. A week later, Ahmadinejad would be elected President—derailing the reform movement, bringing Iran's decade of liberalization to an abrupt end, and leaving millions of young people unmoored.

"I felt hopeless today, for the Iranian people and for going on living here," Mirebrahimi said listlessly. He sat in the corner of his couch, looking small and birdlike; he wore pale-colored clothing and house slippers. "There won't be any space to breathe anymore."

"Today, everyone was teasing me, asking, 'Are you ready for your husband to go back to prison?'" Sharif said from the kitchen. She had a pleasant laugh, and the suppressed liveliness of a young person forced too early into adult troubles.

Mirebrahimi brooded. The reformists, he told me, had to change their tactics and establish more direct bonds with Iranians. "We know that political reform has failed," he said. "After the election, we should sit and talk to our people. In a taxi or the supermarket, we should make people learn about their rights."

Mirebrahimi and his wife were chronically short of paid work, because the government eventually shut down every reformist newspaper they worked for. Sharif complained that Western journalists who covered the newspaper closures rarely mentioned that each time this happened some seventy employees lost their jobs. She spent much of her time trying to extract paychecks from newspapers that no longer existed.

The newspaper that had most recently employed her had been closed earlier that week. On the day of our meeting, she had started a job at *Hamshahri*, the newspaper of the Tehran mayor's office. Since Ahmadinejad had become mayor, *Hamshahri* had taken a conservative turn. I asked her about her first day, and she told me that she had refused her employer's request that she wear a hooded *hijab*, which covers the head more fully than the customary scarf. Her boss had told her that she should write from home, which she had agreed to do.

Ahmadinejad had not been a major figure in Iranian politics, but he had run an effective populist campaign, focussing on the country's poor economic situation and downplaying his religious agenda. His success had surprised journalists like Sharif. "Even at *Hamshahri*, the staff was upset," she said. "They were saying, 'Who knows Ahmadinejad? Since when did he become so popular?' They wondered how people who voted for Khatami could vote for him."

Mirebrahimi told me that although he hoped Moin would win, he hadn't voted. Like many young Iranians, he felt queasy about participating in a system that he fundamentally opposed. But his position was oddly fatalistic, considering that he was in what Farsi speakers call "a dangling situation"—a dire state of uncertainty. Since he was released from custody, in December, Mirebrahimi had grown accustomed to nearly constant surveillance and threats. And an Ahmadinejad victory would very likely imperil his freedom.

Born in 1979, he did not come from an educated or activist family. His father was a taxi-driver and his mother was a seamstress in the Caspian city of Rasht, where the men's cool passivity is so legendary that the city has become the butt of endless cuckoldry jokes. In 1997, he moved to Tehran to study political science; he soon became immersed in the city's journalistic community, where he met Sharif. "I couldn't understand how he could be so bright and gentle," Sharif said. "I didn't see it in other guys. I thought maybe he's depressed, or he's acting, or he's in love with someone. When I met him up close, I got the answer to these questions, and I asked him to marry me."

Their families were scandalized that Sharif had proposed, and by her refusal to accept the customary payment that a groom's family offers his bride. (She eventually succumbed to family pressure.) They married in 2004. The ensuing year, scarred by Mirebrahimi's imprisonment, had been a trial for her. High-spirited and mischievous, she found it hard to adjust to the anxiety of living under surveillance. She told me that the minute Iranian women were permitted to drive motorcycles she would get one. Now, because they were being watched, the couple did not even dare to throw parties on their birthdays.

Some young activists called openly for an end to the Islamic Republic, but Mirebrahimi feared that they were grandstanding, and endangering other young dissidents in the process. "I am more conservative than the new generation," he wrote on his blog, which is in Farsi. "They are rule-breakers." Mirebrahimi aligned himself with the reformists rather than with the young radicals, and he continued to defend Khatami, despite his own deepening reservations: he complained that too many reformists were willing to subordinate democracy and human rights to the strictures of Islam, and although he was a practicing Muslim, he privately believed that religion should not be a political force. In the end, however, he thought that incremental change from within the Islamic system was the only way to bring democracy to Iran.

His troubles with the regime began in the summer of 2003, when Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian journalist, was caught taking photographs outside Tehran's notorious Evin prison; she was accused of espionage and beaten to death in state custody. The news stunned the Iranian public, but Mirebrahimi, who was twenty-four years old and the political editor of the newspaper *Etemaad*, found reason for optimism. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the hard-line Iranian judiciary—particularly the chief prosecutor of Tehran, Saeed Mortazavi—was implicated in Kazemi's killing and a subsequent coverup. If the reformists prosecuted the case, they would show Iranians that they were willing to stand up for human rights.

Mortazavi, a stocky man with a jet-black beard, was a baleful figure to reformist journalists like Mirebrahimi. One Iranian intellectual has described him as "a psychopath, a hanging judge, detested even by the conservatives." An overseer of the press before he was promoted to chief prosecutor, he had shut down dozens of newspapers and jailed so many journalists that he became known as "the butcher of the press." Mortazavi was widely suspected of having initiated Kazemi's detention and even of interrogating her himself. He allegedly coerced the information ministry into announcing that Kazemi had died of a stroke, medical evidence to the contrary.

The reformist-led parliament set up a committee to investigate the Kazemi case. On October 28, 2003, a member of the committee read its report at an open hearing, which was broadcast live on Tehran's state-run radio. The parliamentarians left little doubt that Kazemi had been severely beaten by judiciary officials and died from blows to her head. They also quoted from testimony linking Mortazavi to intimidation, threats, and evidence-tampering in the investigation of the case.

Although Kazemi's family requested a criminal probe, Mortazavi was never disciplined, and only one newspaper in Tehran printed the committee's statement. The others, including *Etemaad*, didn't so much as report the findings. Mirebrahimi learned that Mortazavi had called all of Tehran's editors and threatened to close their newspapers if they covered the committee's finding. Soon after, Mirebrahimi took a call from a reporter for Radio Farda, the American-sponsored Farsi equivalent of Radio Free Europe. The reporter asked him why Tehran's newspapers had not reported on the commission's findings. "I said that Mortazavi was responsible," Mirebrahimi recalled. "And I remember that there was no one to back me up. No other editor came forward to say, 'We know—Mortazavi called us, too.' I was all alone."

Within a week, Mirebrahimi was summoned to the ministry of intelligence and security, where he was told that Mortazavi had complained. He was reprimanded and released.

By the summer of 2004, Mirebrahimi had joined another newspaper, *Jomhouriat*, which was soon shut down by the regime. He turned his attention to his blog, called Shabnameh, which means "night letter." ("Before the Internet, messages were disseminated through the city at night," he explained.) On his blog, Mirebrahimi implored his readers not to forget the plights of political prisoners, and he provided updates on imperilled dissidents.

Iran has an estimated three million to seven million Internet users, the most in the Middle East. Some sixty-five thousand Iranians post blogs, many of them evading government filters by jumping from server to server. In 2004, however, the hard-liners began cracking down on Internet dissent, using both filtering technology and old-fashioned harassment. By October, twenty-one Iranians were imprisoned in connection with blogs. Most were technical administrators of Web sites, but seven were political writers. At eight in the morning on September 29th, Mirebrahimi and Sharif were awakened by the police. Mirebrahimi was handcuffed and blindfolded at his bedside, and taken away. As he later recalled, "Solmaz tried not to show that she was upset in front of me, so I could go with a strong heart."

Mirebrahimi spent sixty days alone in a cell that was the length and width of his prone body. His interrogators repeatedly questioned him about the Radio Farda interview, and they said that his statements would be presented to Mortazavi. He was not permitted to write, and he was blindfolded three times a day, when he was taken to the bathroom and then ordered to perform his ablutions and prayers. He was unwilling to discuss the details of his treatment—"I aged thirty years in prison" was all he would say. But a Human Rights Watch researcher involved with his case told me that the bloggers were beaten, tortured, forced to strip, and sexually taunted.

By late December, foreign pressure was mounting on the Iranian government to release the bloggers, who had not been charged with any crime. Mirebrahimi was released on the night of December 26th. The following day, an emissary from Mortazavi's office told him that he could secure the release of two others. To do so, he recalled, "I had to sign something promising that I wouldn't write the blog anymore. These two bloggers were my friends. I was ready to do anything to get them out. So I signed a letter Mortazavi had written. Afterward, Mortazavi went to the others and said, 'Mirebrahimi signed this, so you should do it, too.' One by one, each blogger who signed it was released. It was a very hard time in my life."

The statement that Mirebrahimi had signed was published in *Etemaad*. It read, in part:

> I, Roozbeh Mirebrahimi, have been one of the accused in connection with the file of Internet sites. . . . During the past few years, I and others like me had fallen into the hands of those . . . who made use of people like me in order to implement their evil projects. . . . Unfortunately, whatever I wrote during that period . . . undermined the reputation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. . . . I strongly attacked various pillars of the system, especially the judiciary, by making various allegations against them, and I have portrayed them as being against human rights. . . .
>
> During the past few years, there existed . . . a frightful network, one end of which was inside the country and the other end outside its borders. . . . Due to my weakness, I also joined that network. . . . I was the source of reports and interviews with foreign and counter-revolutionary radio stations. . . . The involvement of some organizations and individuals from outside the country for supporting individuals such as me is shameful, because people like me have trampled upon the laws of this country. . . .
>
> The claim that I was in solitary confinement is not true. Throughout the period of my detention I experienced nothing but kindness and respect from those who were dealing with us. Here, I wish to express my gratitude for the kindness of those individuals and to pray to God Almighty for their success and well-being.

Mirebrahimi was a free man, but he was now an admitted spy. Worse, the prosecutor wouldn't leave him alone. "During those first twenty days, the police called me fifteen times, for stupid reasons," he told me. "If, on the other side of the world, someone wrote something about me, they called me in. My family and I were under constant pressure." Mortazavi also relayed a threat to Mirebrahimi: it would be very easy for an accident to befall him on the street.

Mirebrahimi and other bloggers who had been threatened decided that the only way to clear their names and to combat the threat to their lives would be to publicize what had happened to them. "We decided to place our trust in President Khatami," Mirebrahimi told me.

Officials in Khatami's office instructed the bloggers to present their case to a special commission on human rights, which would then report to the President. When Mirebrahimi addressed the commission, he recalled, "The first thing I said was that when we leave this place, if any accident happens to us, just know that Mortazavi is responsible. After we

MAGNUM

Roozbeh Mirebrahimi, a dissident who was imprisoned for blogging, and his wife, Solmaz Sharif. Photograph by Abbas.

told them everything that happened to us, the members of the commission were in tears. Even some clerics. Some parts of our story were so terrible that I asked my wife to leave the room."

After Mirebrahimi testified, Mortazavi tried to hunt him down. "We couldn't go home for a week," he recalled. "We couldn't go to our families' homes. We were homeless in east Tehran. We stayed in friends' houses for short periods of time."

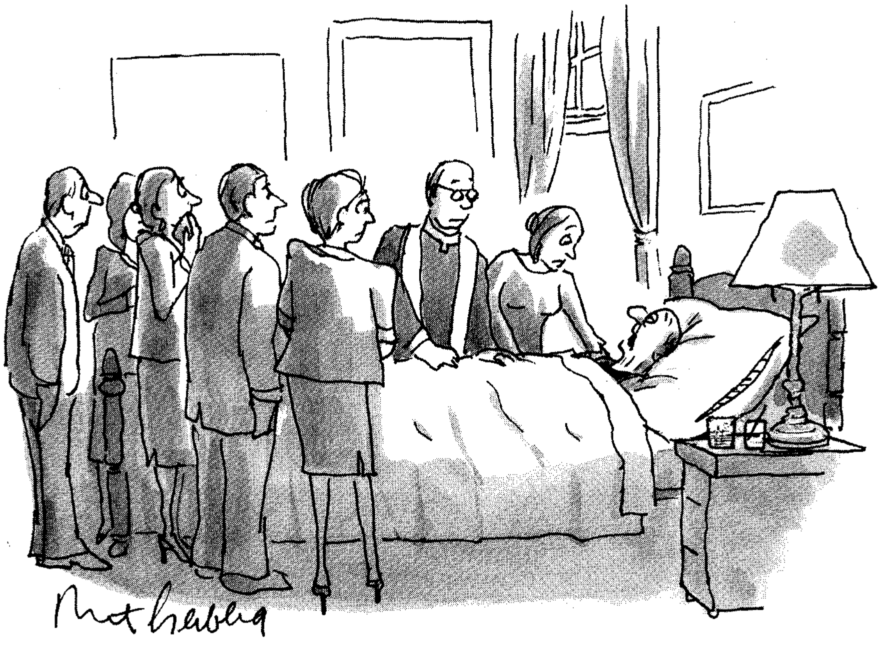
One official who had heard the bloggers' testimony was Mohammad Ali Abtahi, who was then an adviser to President Khatami; he posted an account of the meeting on his own blog. (Abtahi's Web site is one of the most popular in the Farsi language.) It was soon public knowledge that Mirebrahimi had been tortured and forced to sign a confession, and that the reformists in the administration had heard his story and lent it credence.

In the meantime, the commission made its report to Khatami, who approached Iran's Chief Justice, Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi, a cleric who had provided religious training to Khamenei. Though his political views were conservative, Shahrudi had acquired a reputation for pragmatism and independence. A government source told Mirebrahimi about Khatami's exchange with Shahrudi. Khatami reportedly informed the Chief Justice that the public believed that the bloggers were tortured in prison. Shahrudi replied that Mortazavi had assured him that the bloggers were lying. As Mirebrahimi told the story, "Khatami took a strong position against Mortazavi for the first time during his Presidency. He announced that his investigations showed that we were tortured in prison, and that is not good for the regime. He even said that some people who were handling this case—meaning Mortazavi—were guilty themselves."

Shahrudi arranged to meet with the bloggers on January 10, 2005. "Our meeting lasted two hours," Mirebrahimi told me. "He listened to what we said, and some of it upset him greatly. He was saying, '*Allah akbar! Allah akbar!*'" When the bloggers were finished, Mirebrahimi recalled, "Shahrudi said, 'If anyone calls you and asks you to go somewhere, don't go. Tell them that you just met with me, and I know everything.'"

After that meeting, Shahrudi, over Mortazavi's objections, appointed a committee of three judges to review the bloggers' files. The committee cleared seventeen but kept the files of four open. Among them was Mirebrahimi's. "I'm still frightened," Mirebrahimi told me. "It's like there's a sword hanging over my head."

And yet, in Mirebrahimi's eyes, the conservative Chief Justice, by his actions, had become a force for reform. Shahrudi issued a public letter in which he denounced the bloggers' treatment in prison. "For the first time in twenty-six years of the Islamic Republic, they announced that the courts had done something wrong," Mirebrahimi said. But he added that the Presidential elections were likely to render this advance nearly irrelevant. "If Ahmadinejad is President, the only reformist left in government will be Shahrudi," he said.



"One last request: move my car to the 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. Monday-Thursday side of the street for tomorrow."

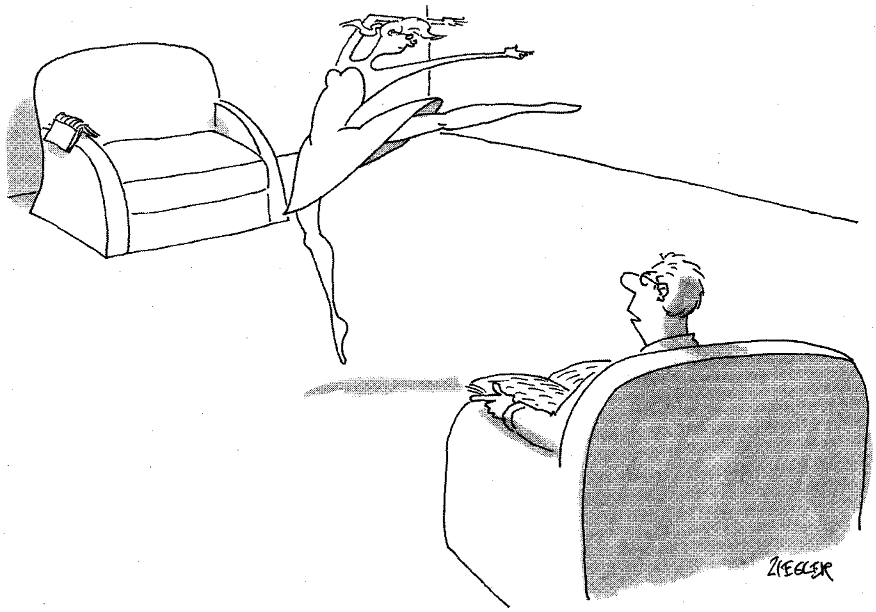
The Artists' House is a gallery and café in central Tehran, around the corner from the former American Embassy. It is a gathering place for young artists, intellectuals, and bohemians. Abdollah Momeni, the twenty-eight-year-old leader of Iran's most prominent student-activist group, met me there one afternoon in June.

Momeni's organization, Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat—the Office for the Consolidation of Unity—was founded in 1979. During the first decade of the Islamic Republic, the group functioned as an arm of the new regime, helping to purge the universities of people and ideas deemed contrary to Islam. In the nineteen-nineties, Daftar-e Tahkim-e Vahdat aligned itself with the reform movement, but it broke away when Khatami failed to condemn the 1999 crackdown at Tehran University.

We sat at a table on the café's terrace. Momeni told me that he had been imprisoned twice and summoned to court fifteen times. Like Mirebrahimi's, his court files are still open. But, whereas Mirebrahimi seemed solitary and vulnerable, Momeni spoke confidently, in the first-person plural. He also appeared preoccupied, making phone calls or reading the newspaper from time to time as we spoke.

During the spring, Momeni had become the public face of the student-led election boycott. I asked him about his group's decision. "We aren't interested in seeing who will be President," he said. "We are just interested in constructing democracy." Reformist politicians such as Khatami were mere "window dressing for the regime." They provided a veneer of legitimacy to a system that was, ultimately, impervious to reform.

In 2003, Momeni and six other activist leaders, with the support of Iranian exiles abroad, began promoting the idea of holding a public referendum on the continued existence of the Islamic



"Can't we just this once, for God's sake, stay on topic?"

Republic. The Islamic Republic had been established by popular referendum; a new vote would allow the people to revoke the system's legitimacy in the same way they'd granted it. Thirty-five thousand people signed an online petition calling for such a referendum.

It was impossible to imagine that Khamenei's regime, heavily armed and flush with oil money, would agree anytime soon to hold a plebiscite on its own survival, concede defeat, and disappear. But, next to the muddle and compromise of the reform movement, the referendum offered a refreshing clarity—a willingness to go straight to the heart of its supporters' desires, and a rejection of the Islamic Republic's democratic pretenses. Perhaps in time, some exiles have suggested, if activists could somehow mobilize a mass civil-disobedience movement against the government, a referendum could facilitate the end of the regime.

Momeni respected the work of reformist philosophers who sought to reconcile Islam with liberalism. But he told me that he was inspired, above all, by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who has written about the importance of creating a "public sphere" for open debate. "No revolution will happen, not by force," Momeni told me. "We know that a government that comes by force must use force in order to survive. We don't want such a government here anymore." Instead, like Mirebrahimi, he supported building strong human-rights groups and democracy organizations outside government.

Momeni believed that Iran's activists could be bolstered by diplomatic pressure from the international community. But Western powers, he lamented, were excessively preoccupied with the country's nuclear program. (Iranian authorities insist that the country is developing nuclear technology as an energy source, but outside experts fear that the country may produce weapons within the decade.) Momeni suggested that the European Union press Iran to improve its human-rights record rather than halt its nuclear production. In his view, American calls for democratic change in the Muslim world were useful for the Iranian democracy movement, but he had no illusions about their sincerity. "Foreign powers like the United States want democracy for the Middle East not because of the people but because they want to locate the terrorist bases," he told me. "They want to install a government they'll find predictable. They aren't interested in the national dignity of Iran."

I asked Momeni if he felt that he was being watched or followed. "One hundred per cent," he replied. "These two guys next to us are here for me. Whenever I go home, most of the time I see someone behind me."

I looked at the table to our right, where two older men with scruffy beards, mobile phones, and briefcases sat over tea, looking sorely out of place among the café's cosmopolitan crowd. Later, my translator told me that the men had been sitting there for some time, but one had stared at her so fixedly that she could not signal us even with her eyes. Another bearded man paced the terrace behind us, and yet another, inside the building, peered over my shoulder from a window, cell phone in hand.

Momeni left first. When my driver pulled up, the bearded men surrounded the car and took down the license-plate number. There was not even the pretense of stealth.

From the moment that Khatami came to power, Ayatollah Khamenei and his clerical élite worried that the universities would become centers of dissent. They turned to the Basij, a hard-line militia of young fundamentalists who provided physical enforcement for the conservatives. The Basij was created in 1979; during the Iran-Iraq War, it dispatched volunteers to the front, and later the militia manned checkpoints along the streets of Tehran, searching cars for banned Western music or pictures of uncovered women. Parliamentary hard-liners established a Basij unit in every Iranian university in the nineteen-nineties. After the 1999 clash with students, the Basij aggressively restored "order" throughout the universities in Tehran.

When I visited the Tehran University faculty of social sciences this summer, I met with some Basij leaders in a sweltering empty classroom equipped with a whirring but ineffectual air-conditioner. Sajad Saffar-Harandi, the head of the faculty's Basij force, said that his team consisted of eighty to ninety registered Basijis and around a hundred others, who "help." Twenty-two years old, he wore the beard, long-sleeved shirt, and pants characteristic of the militia. He looked like a teen-ager, and had a sharp, handsome face, a slight frame, and hard eyes, which the student who brought me to him sternly instructed me not to look into.

"The Basij is the heart and soul of the Islamic revolution in Iran, particularly the university Basijis," Saffar-Harandi told me. "We are the keepers and protectors of the movement through gen-

TURKEY BUZZARDS

They've been so long above it all,
those two petals
so steeped in style they seem to stall
in the kettle

simmering over the town dump
or, better still,
the neon-flashed, X-rated rump
of fresh roadkill

courtesy of the interstate
that Eisenhower
would overtake in the home straight
by one horsepower,

the kettle where it all boils down
to the thick scent
of death, a scent of such renown
it's given vent

to the idea buzzards can spot
a deer carcass
a mile away, smelling the rot
as, once, Marcus

Aurelius wrinkled his nose
at a gas leak
from the Great Sewer that ran
through Rome
to the Tiber

then went searching out, through
the gloam,
one subscriber
to the other view that the rose,
full-blown, antique,

its no-frills ruff, the six-foot shrug
of its swing-wings,
the theologian's and the thug's
twin triumphings

in a buzzard's shaved head
and snood,
buzz-buzz-buzzy,
its logic in all likelihood
somewhat fuzzy,

would ever come into focus,
it ever deign
to dispense its hocus-pocus
in that same vein

as runs along an inner thigh
to where, too right,
the buzzard vouchsafes not to shy
away from shite,

its mission not to give a miss
to a bête noire,
all roly-poly, full of piss
and vinegar,

trying rather to get to grips
with the grommet
of the gut, setting its tin snips
to that grommet

in the spray-painted hind's hindgut
and making a
sweeping, too right, a sweeping cut
that's so blasé

it's hard to imagine, dear sis,
why others shrink
from this sight of a soul in bliss,
so in the pink

erations." He lamented that the Khatami administration had led Iran astray from the Islamic Republic's founding values. An Ahmadinejad Presidency, he said, would put a stop to that. "The dress code is not a priority in this term," he asserted. "The priority is to be sure we are governing completely based on the values of Islam." A few weeks after I left Tehran, Ahmadinejad appointed Saffar-Harandi's father, Mohammad Hossein Saffar-Harandi, at that time the editor-in-chief of the hard-line daily *Kayhan*, to the powerful position of minister of culture and Islamic guidance.

Saffar-Harandi left me to his underling, who was less polished and more fervent. Ali Belashabadi, the son of a carpet weaver who was disabled in the Iran-Iraq War, was studying social communications in the hope of becoming a journalist. An Ahmadinejad administration, he told me, would not stop young Iranians from evaluating the government, just as long as they did so in a "constructive" way. "It won't be like Khatami's Presidency, when freedom was so indefinable that lots of people had their own definitions of freedom and did things in the name of social and political freedom that aren't desirable and are far from the values of the Islamic Republic," he said. "Ahmadinejad's term will be about moderate freedom."

Under Khatami, he explained disapprovingly, some political activists, in the name of freedom, had questioned the role of the Supreme Leader. "I am so sad that these groups are trying to weaken the position of the Supreme Leadership, the thing we are most loyal to," he said. "This is our identity as Muslims."

Ahmadinejad would reverse that trend, he predicted, and he would eventually restore the dress code. "Even in the university, we see the young generation of women dressing in a way that is meant to attract attention," Belashabadi said. "This is an academic atmosphere, and the men can't pay attention. Even non-Muslims, if they were here, would be attracted to this kind of fashion." Islam, he told me, disapproves of women who wear makeup, perfume, or alluring clothes for anyone but their husbands. "These are fundamental values," he said. "We had a revolution for these values."

from another month in the red
of the shambles,
like a rose in over its head
among brambles,

unflappable in its belief
it's Ararat
on which the Ark would come to grief,
abjuring that

Marcus Aurelius humbug
about what springs
from earth succumbing to the tug
at its heartstrings,

reported to live past fifty,
as you yet may,
dear sis, perhaps growing your hair
in requital,

though briefly, of whatever tears
at your vitals,
learning, perhaps, from the nifty,
nay *thrifty*, way

these buzzards are given to stoop
and take their ease
by letting their time-chastened poop
fall to their knees

till they're almost as bright with lime
as their night roost,
their poop containing an enzyme
that's known to boost

their immune systems, should they
prong
themselves on small
bones in a cerebral cortex,
at no small cost

to their well-being, sinking fast
in a deer crypt,
buzzards getting the hang at last
of being stripped

of their command of the vortex
while having lost
their common touch, they've been
so long
above it all.

—*Paul Muldoon*

I asked Belashabadi what he thought should be done about the satellite channels on which Iranians watch illicit fare such as music videos, Western movies, and political commentary from Iranian exiles abroad. "The majority of the population is young," he said. "Young people by nature are horny. Because they are horny, they like to watch satellite channels where there are films or programs they can jerk off to." The regime could filter the channels, he suggested, or it could try to educate the people to tune in to more wholesome programming. He concluded, "We have to do something about satellite television to keep society free from this horny jerk-off situation."

My translator implored me, in a jaw-clenched monotone, "Please do not laugh right now. This is a very sensitive moment."

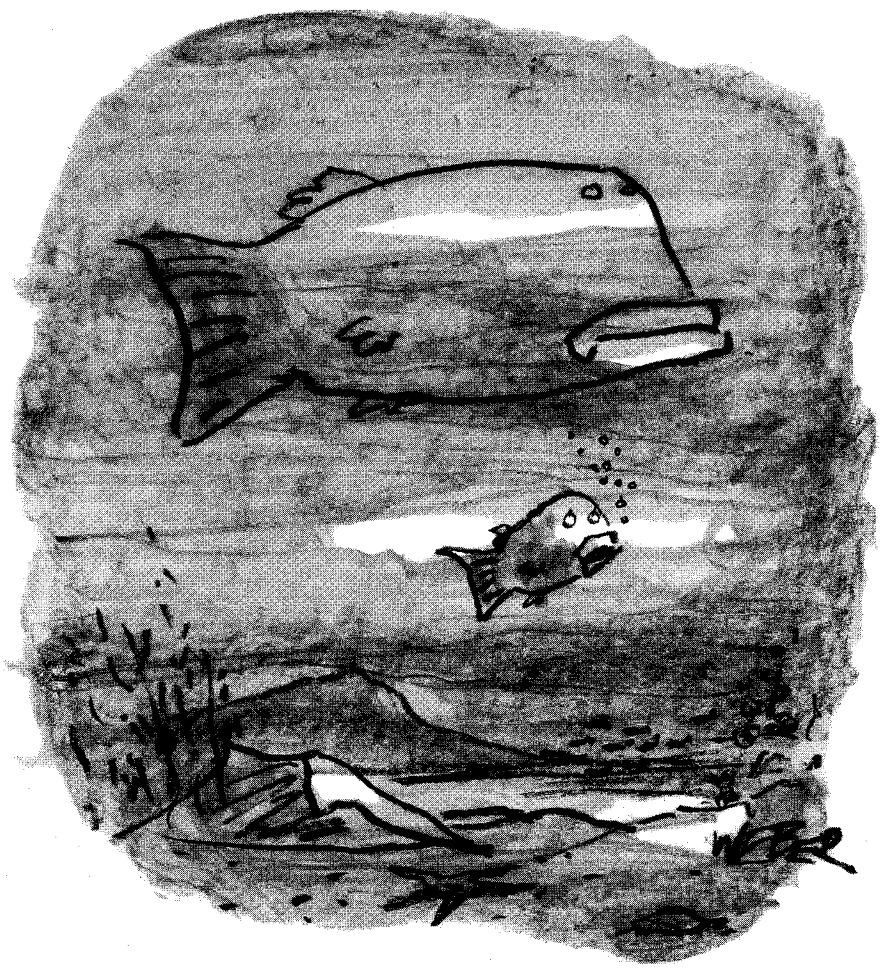
The food court at Jaam-e Jam, an upscale shopping mall in north Tehran, looks like a shopping-mall food court anywhere, with its colorful plastic chairs attached to glass-topped tables. An array of counters sell fast food that is billed as Mexican or Italian but invariably tastes more or less Persian. Nevertheless, it is one of the more expensive places to eat in Tehran, and it is a gathering spot for fashionable Iranian girls, who come in their skimpiest *hijabs*. I saw young women wearing three-quarter-length sleeves, cropped pants, and high-heeled sandals. One young woman had a sequinned purse and a tight denim manteau that had jeans-style pockets on the backside.

A man who asked to be identified as Arash, a twenty-five-year-old from an upper-middle-class family, was trying to help me identify "Javads"—a common male name that has become derisive slang among Iranian youth for people who, as Arash put it, "think they're very modern and very cool and great but are not."

"Five years ago, the sure sign of a Javad was driving a Nissan Maxima," he explained. "In non-Javad communities, that was a sign that your dad was a motherfucker who had become very rich after the revolution, but who was from a poor-culture family." Today, with the relaxing of the dress codes, Iran's nouveaux riches are harder to spot, but Arash offered some additional examples: "A girl who has some enormous makeup that's unnecessary for the situation, high heels, but she's a virgin and has no boyfriend and wants an arranged marriage. Or a person who looks very modern but can't speak English, and who likes Farsi music from Los Angeles."

For Arash, who has never been to the United States, being truly modern was all about being American. Born the year after the revolution, he speaks profane but excellent English, littered with slang he has gleaned from contraband hip-hop. The rappers 50 Cent and The Game surely never imagined that the line "the underdog's on top," from "Hate It or Love It," a gleeful rap about their own success, would capture the frustration of the onetime Iranian élite under the rule of backward mullahs. But, to Arash, American hip-hop is rich with Iranian social criticism.

Arash told me that he hated living in Iran. "These mullahs fucked up this country. The country is sick right now. I can't live in a sick situation. For that reason, I couldn't vote yesterday. I'd give my life for America, but not for Iran. Because, if I work a lot there, I may achieve something. In Iran, when you want something, plan for it, work your ass off for it, you cannot make it and have no clear future." If he had voted, I suggested, he at least might have helped prevent the country from falling entirely under the control of hard-liners. Arash offered an analogy. "If America one day became a dictatorship—if everything changed



"Why is it so wet?"

• •

overnight and Hezbollah came to rule the country—are you going to enter politics and help Hezbollah?" he asked. "Or do you just not enter politics?"

Arash worked for an environmental group, but he could not advance far in his career without establishing connections in clerical circles. His Western style of dress also marked him as an outsider. He had a passion for Iran's rugged landscape—he had done a lot of backpacking—and he loved its people, especially the nomads and villagers he had met during his travels. Still, he wanted to see the world, and in order to go almost anyplace other than Turkey he'd need a visa, which was hard for an Iranian to come by. Arash complained bitterly that foreign embassies would assume that he was a terrorist. He longed for contact with foreigners, but he quit a job as a tour guide when he discovered that he was required to spy on his clients. The rap music and Western movies he loved were available only on the black market. And Iranian sexual culture, he said, was suffocating.

The enforced sexual repression of the Islamic Republic had spawned a culture of extremes—virginity and arranged marriages on the one hand, sexual libertinism on the other. For young people from Iran's middle and upper classes, promiscuous experimentation was the norm. Even though young Iranians live with their families until marriage, Arash said, "this generation has the Internet, films, satellite television, porno. You can't force them to be fanatics." Unfortunately, he added, young Iranian women, in their efforts to be modern, had succeeded only in becoming vulgar. "The girls here have no clue that you mustn't talk about sex 24/7," he said. The male role in this dynamic didn't much appeal to Arash, either. "It's a male-dominated society, and I hate it," he said. Iranian men, he said, were expected to be both promiscuous and "psycho-jealous." He went on, "There is no culture where you and your girlfriend can be together, live together. It's the worst thing."

Sex segregation in Iranian schools compounded the gender divide. Once, when Arash was a college student, he was arrested for walking down the street with a female classmate. The penalty was ninety-nine lashes, but Arash escaped it by paying the authorities a hundred and fifty dollars. "Everything we do is against the law," he told me. "It can change in a minute, and that minute is not definable. Back then, there were hundreds of checkpoints on the streets. 'Who is this girl with you? What are these CDs, books, pictures?' We are all outlaws."

The outlaw life, for many young Iranians, involves all-night parties and illegal drugs. In a country where alcohol is illegal and opium flows easily across the long Afghan border, recreational drug use has reached epidemic proportions. Iran has the highest rate of opiate addiction in the world. "Iran is like the United States in the sixties and seventies," Arash told me. At parties I attended, some Iranians smoked opium as casually as Americans smoke marijuana. Although only fifteen per cent of the drugs that enter Iran are impounded by the police, this amount includes about eighty-five per cent of all the opiates seized globally.

In Arash's world, drug abuse reflected the apathy, boredom, and impotence of a middle class that had become increasingly alienated in the twenty-six years since the revolution. "The Iranian situation has made us passive," he said. "We are not active anymore. '*Inshallah*'—this is killing us. We do nothing and leave everything to God."

In school, Arash recalled, students were forced to stand in rows and shout slogans: "Long live Khomeini!" and "Death to America!" Sometimes they would be directed to step on an American flag chalked onto the asphalt. "I was always feeling very bad," Arash told me. "I'd be thinking, I like American culture! Why am I saying, Down with this?"

At first, America was a place where Arash imagined he could have a big farm and raise horses. As he grew older, black America would become his fantasy within a fantasy—a space where he could be both the free man he wanted to be and the underdog he considered himself to be. He confided that he'd exchanged e-mail messages with a black woman in Ohio, whom he hoped to marry so that he could get a green card. The night I met Arash, on the way to a party in the north of Tehran, we'd talked about "8 Mile," the movie starring Eminem. As he explained the film, "It's about growing up in a place you don't like and working your ass off to get out of it."

His dreams of flight had begun the first time he left Iran, just a few years earlier, for a short trip to Istanbul. Everything thrilled him. He went to clubs with live d.j.s. He saw American movies. He wore hip-hop clothes without fear of harassment. "Something lit up in my soul," he said. "For a person always in prison, seeing the free world—for me, my life started the minute I left Iran." Since his return, he has thought of nothing but going abroad again. As we left Jaam-e Jam, Arash rattled off a list of desired destinations: China, France, Italy. He then added, in a tossed-off manner that stopped me cold, "But none of these countries will ever give me a visa. So I'll probably die here with my dreams."

Two days before the runoff election between Ahmadinejad and Rafsanjani, Arash and I attended an evening gathering of friends and family in north Tehran, near Vanak Square. At two in the morning, we heard shouting outside the host's apartment, and we went out for a drive to look around. The Rafsanjani campaign had dispatched scores of young people, their faces painted, to shout from motorcycles and distribute bumper stickers and posters, which they scattered like confetti. Ahmadinejad supporters had come out, too, and transformed affluent north Tehran into a Basij rally. As we nosed through the crowded streets, earnest bearded young men slapped Ahmadinejad posters onto our car's windshield and tossed CDs in through the open windows. They seemed to outnumber the Rafsanjani campaigners, whose slogans were becoming increasingly absurdist. "D.J. Ali Akbar!" one group of campaigners shouted, to Arash's delight.

Revolutionary Guards directed traffic at chaotic intersections. A car ahead of us had affixed a poster to its rear window. According to Arash, it read, "Fellow Moin supporters: Because we do not want to allow the country to choke and end up in the hands of the Basij, now vote for Rafsanjani."

Even Arash, despite his disavowal of politics, was thinking of voting for Rafsanjani. "Somehow I've gotta work with this country, if I don't leave," he said. But, in the end, he couldn't bring himself to cast a ballot.

At three in the morning, we reached Ahmadinejad's campaign headquarters on Fereshteh, an upscale street. The headquarters were still open, showing videos of the candidate's biography on a large television screen and serving pineapple juice on metal tables in a stone courtyard. Arash picked up a campaign flyer and translated it for me. It listed the reasons that Ahmadinejad's rivals might believe that the Tehran Mayor shouldn't be President: that his clothing was less expensive than that of his security detail, for example, or that instead of rewarding loyal cronies for their services the Mayor arranged loans for young married couples. Compared with Rafsanjani—who had become notorious, during his earlier Presidency, for his wealth and corruption—Ahmadinejad appeared to be a humble outsider. He managed to appeal not only to militants and conservatives, or even just to the legions of frustrated poor; he also captured some of the protest vote, from people who saw Rafsanjani as the embodiment of the status quo. That morning, a waiter in the restaurant at my hotel had explained this to me without even the benefit of a common language. "Rafsanjani," he said, and made a face, pantomiming rolls of fat at his waist and a turban on his head. "Ahmadinejad," he said, smiling, and tugged on his own clothes, holding out a level hand equal to his own height.

At Ahmadinejad's campaign headquarters, Arash and I met Mohammad Mahdi, a nineteen-year-old volunteer with enormous eyes, tousled hair, a worn yellow T-shirt, and a sweet smile. "I am speaking as a true Basiji who loves my country from the depths of my heart," he informed us. He came from a working-class Tehrani family and studied industrial management at the university. He praised Ahmadinejad's commitment to improving education and economic opportunities for young people. Mahdi was sure that his candidate posed no threat to the people's freedom. In fact, he had voted for Khatami in 2001, and now reproached the outgoing President. "We really respected Khatami, but he couldn't use the popular support he had. Khatami promised to improve political freedom, but he couldn't do it."

Soon, a campaign higher-up pulled Mahdi away, admonishing him not to talk to an American. Still, Mahdi managed to steal back to our table before we left. "When you meet Ahmadinejad, he's so humble that you almost think you're the boss and he's the one who wants something from you," he confided.

The morning after Ahmadinejad's victory, I went to visit Arash at his parents' apartment. When I arrived, he wasn't dressed; his mother and aunt served me breakfast while he was in the shower. He emerged wearing a sleeveless basketball jersey and long, baggy shorts.

"Wassup, homey?" Arash said cheerfully when he saw me.

"You have a new President," I said.

I had assumed that he knew. Confused, he sank down onto the couch. His aunt spoke up hoarsely. "Ahmadinejad" was all she said.

Arash, who normally talked himself to the point of exhaustion, said nothing. He sat with his head in his hands for nearly ten minutes. The bread that his mother had warmed cooled on the table. He kneaded his forehead, blinked, stared at the floor. Finally, he said, "Everything is finished."

Later that day, I went to see a man who is perhaps Iran's most famous and most endangered dissident, for whom the stakes of Ahmadinejad's victory were unimaginably high. Hashem Aghajari, a historian at Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University, is a popular hero in Iran, especially among students. A revolutionary religious intellectual, Aghajari had lost a leg fighting in the Iran-Iraq War. But in a 2002 speech in

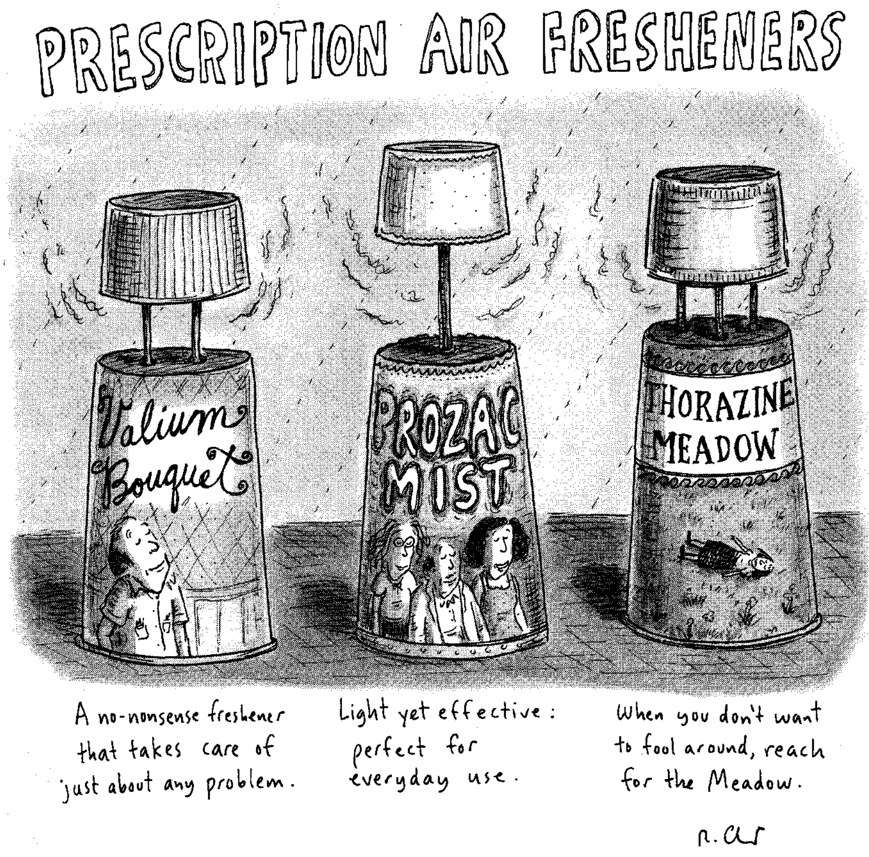
Hamadan, the city he's from, Aghajari called for a reformation of Shiite Islam and proclaimed that Muslims were not "monkeys" who should "blindly follow" religious leaders. He was convicted of apostasy and sentenced to death by hanging.

Aghajari's sentence provoked a national crisis. Demonstrating students clashed with hard-line militias in the streets. The case also attracted international attention; in 2003, Aghajari was widely believed to be a finalist for the Nobel Peace Prize. Capitulating to the pressure, Ayatollah Khamenei intervened; and there was a retrial. The historian's sentence was eventually commuted to five years in prison, of which he served two before being released on bail, in July, 2004.

I went to see Aghajari in his office at the university, a pale brick compound with grassy courtyards and layers of security at the gate. He was gracious and soft-spoken, with thinning gray hair. Pulling on a pipe from time to time, he told me that, after the Cold War, American-style democracy had become globally ascendant. He hoped that the democracy which would one day emerge in Iran would be one based on Islamic ethics and spirituality. That would be Khatami's Islam, not the Islam of hard-line clerics. As for the support of outsiders, he said, "We should defend all nations' rights to control their own destiny, and to achieve democracy and freedom. But this defense is not military. It is moral and political."

Unlike many of the other reformist intellectuals I'd met, Aghajari had supported the student boycott of the election and criticized the reformists for fielding Presidential candidates. He also supported the referendum on the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic. "But we have to find a good route to get there," he added. "Putting the referendum petition on the Internet was a little premature, in my opinion. But the situation is such that there is not much more time for us. I hear some reformists saying that within six hundred years there will be democracy. That's like saying, during the age of computers, that to have our own computer we will have to start with the wheel."

Ahmadinejad won the election with seventeen million votes; Rafsanjani received ten million. Some twenty million Iranians didn't vote. "Those in power have many serious struggles ahead," Aghajari predicted. "Thirty million Iranians didn't vote for Ahmadinejad. The government can't put them aside and not see them. These thirty million may keep quiet for the moment, but when the time is right they will defend their rights."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R. Ch

Ahmadinejad acted with apparent confidence in the first months of his Presidency, banning foreign movies, purging the diplomatic corps of moderates, and adopting a belligerent tone on foreign-policy matters. In a speech to the United Nations, in September, he signalled that Iran would not abandon its quest for nuclear technology, and in October, at a Tehran conference called "A World Without Zionism," he declared that Israel should be "wiped off the map." Ahmadinejad has been comparatively quiet about Iraq, but Iran's Revolutionary Guard, to which he remains particularly close, is suspected of supporting Shiite Islamists there. Without Khatami, there is no brake on Iran's most confrontational impulses. The regime, as Aghajari explained to me in June, had "come together in one hand."

Now that the hard-liners had complete control of the government, Aghajari said, they would be held responsible for meeting the people's needs—it would no longer be possible to blame the reformists. Soon enough, Aghajari said, the seventeen million Iranians who had placed their hopes in Ahmadinejad would confront his inability to make the economic changes he promised, even while the walls closed in on Iran's cultural and political life. Within a year, Aghajari believed, Ahmadinejad would face an angry and disappointed populace.

Indeed, the new President's first months in office seemed to bear out Aghajari's predictions. Ahmadinejad set aside more than a billion dollars for grants to newlyweds, but such gestures will not resolve the country's economic problems. Foreign capital is fleeing to Dubai, and Tehran's stock market has fallen by twenty per cent since May. Curiously, Ayatollah Khamenei issued an edict in October that gave sweeping new powers to Rafsanjani, who runs a government body known as the Expediency Council—a move widely seen as an effort to rein in Ahmadinejad. The new President, in other words, may be too hard-line for even the Supreme Leader.

In June, however, Aghajari insisted that he was not in despair over Ahmadinejad's victory. "I'm optimistic," he said.

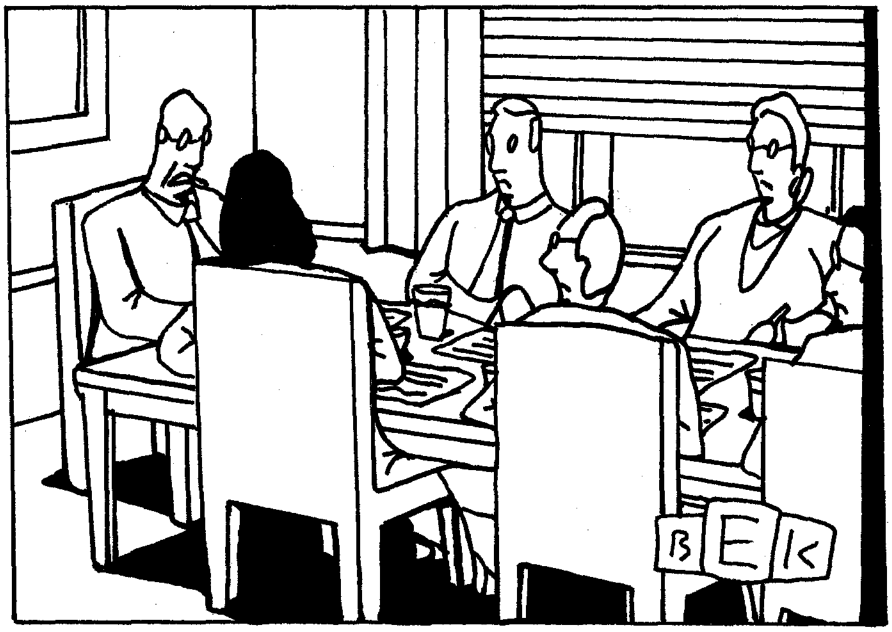
"The people of Iran should experience this period so that things go better in the future. If the people hadn't experienced theocracy, they would still be waiting for it. But now that we have experienced theocracy, there is no future for it here."

I had seen Aghajari a week earlier, when he remarked that, if the "fascists" controlled the entire government, he imagined that he would eventually suffer the same fate as the assassinated dissidents of the late nineteen-nineties. I asked him now whether he feared for his life.

He took his pipe from his mouth and smiled. "We have a saying in Farsi," he replied. " 'There is no shade darker than black.' The worst they can do is execute me. I have prepared myself for that. If I am worried, it is not for myself. It's for the Iranian people, for young people, today's generation and future generations. My freedom and my life, and those of one or two people like me, don't matter. They may take me to prison. I'm ready for that. In this society, we have no freedom to speak or to write. This is a prison, too."

A year ago, after I returned from a trip to Iran, I met in Washington with an official at the State Department, who was convinced that the Iranian regime was hardening even then. "The regime will be even more secure when it's rid of Khatami," the official told me. "He shook things up. At the time he was elected, they were frightened. If he had been more forceful, there could have been a civil war. He might have forced the issue. But he chose not to." As a result, the official said, the reform movement that Washington had hoped would be Iran's perestroika had turned out to be its Prague Spring—a flowering of freedom that quickly withered. Those who sought democratic change would now be forced underground, where they would turn inward or on one another in the years that it would take to devise a new, more potent strategy.

Roozbeh Mirebrahimi sometimes wondered why he had volunteered for the role of dissident. In August, he wrote an e-mail that said, "Why must a guy like me, in the throes of youth, work this hard for a minimum of rights? Just so others can speak freely, so that they don't stammer with fear, and they can get their very first rights. Sometimes when I sit alone and think, I ask myself why and for whom it is that I'm making such a sacrifice."



"It's time to call in other people who don't know more but are just different."

On his blog and in his e-mails to me, Mirebrahimi sometimes resembled a bereaved man sorting through the personal effects of a loved one who had unforgivably disappointed him. The reform movement as he had known it was dead. But whether it had served to advance or to thwart the ambitions of young Iranians like himself remained uncertain.

For Mirebrahimi, Khatami embodied the movement's promise and its failure, and it was with pained ambivalence that he watched the President leave office, on July 30th. He wrote on his blog, "I only feel sorrow for Mr. Khatami, that everything he had in the palm of his hand in most regards will disappear into the sky." Later, he questioned his own sorrow. Khatami held a ceremony honoring his return to private life. At the event, he was asked about the political prisoner Akbar Ganji. "The problem is more on Ganji's side," Khatami said, blaming Ganji's extended incarceration on his refusal to stop speaking out against the regime.

Mirebrahimi wrote, "Truth be told, a while ago I wanted to get a letter to him somehow, which I wrote upon the end of his Presidency, and thank him and let him know how well I appreciate the lasting accomplishments he made during his term. I'd readied the letter a while back, but the position Khatami took about Ganji made me abandon the idea of sending it." In the next election, Mirebrahimi wrote ruefully, the reformists would most likely not even be allowed to put up posters.

Not long after the elections, he informed me, his wife was purged from the staff of another newspaper, *Towseh*, on account of her husband's activities. In fact, any publication that considered hiring Mirebrahimi or his wife was immediately subject to pressure and threats. "Nowadays, practically all it takes to close a newspaper is my entering into it," he said. By this fall, the couple were in dire straits—a dangling situation—financially and professionally. "This is exactly what my enemies wanted for me," he wrote. Mirebrahimi told me that he spent his days surfing the Internet and hoping for better times. "In Iran, we live in an environment that creates anxiety, and we endure these difficulties," he wrote. "We don't know what will happen tomorrow. I remember that you were at our home the night that Ahmadinejad won the first round of the elections. You asked me how I saw the future. I said, 'For the future, reform, and for Iran, illumination. But for us, difficulty and danger.' Then I said I would tolerate it. Yet today I see that it is more difficult and more dangerous than I'd imagined." ♦

OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

GREEN DREAMS

A queen, a shipwreck, and the mystery behind a rare set of jewels.

BY CYNTHIA ZARIN

Fred Leighton, the jeweller, is situated on the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and Sixty-sixth Street. The ornate awning, window frames, and door are polished brass—from the outside the shop looks like an outsized brooch set with precious stones. The jewels in the window displays, arranged on gray suede shelves, change regularly, but on any given day their value is upward of twenty million dollars. Almost all of them are rare and old, and, either a lifetime or five minutes ago, belonged to someone who loved them. Most of them are currently loved, some passionately, by Fred Leighton himself. But Leighton, who, at seventy-two, looks more like an aging jazz producer than like one of the most important jewellers in the world—he favors sharkskin suits, and his graying hair hangs in points almost to his shoulders—usually wears only one jewel himself: a discreet lapel pin in the shape of a jockey. The jockey's cap is made of eleven tiny diamonds, and his body, the size of a cat's eye, is a shining moonstone. Like all the best gamblers, Leighton trusts his instincts.

Jewels have not loomed large in my life. Nevertheless, during the late spring and summer of this year I found myself at Fred Leighton staring with a certain amount of desperation at a pair of emerald earrings. They were three and a half inches long. Pear-shaped emeralds, set in borders of green-tinged gold, descended in tiers. There were thirty-eight absolutely clear blue-green gems in each earring, and the two central briolette emeralds weighed fifteen carats apiece. The stones made me think of crocodile tears.

The emeralds were part of a set. There was a gold handwrought pendant containing forty-five square-cut, shield-shaped, and briolette emeralds; two cluster rings, with, respectively, nineteen and twenty-five emeralds, totalling 15.4 carats (there was a small hole in the band of each ring so that it could be sewn onto the finger of a gauntlet glove); and sixteen buttonlike links, each made up of six step-cut and three oval, briolette, or round emeralds. The three hundred and nine emeralds in the set total 232.64 carats.

The jewels looked as if they were meant for a queen, which I was not. As I gazed at the emeralds, I understood, for the first time, the lure of jewels, and I recognized in myself the stirrings of lust and avarice. When I finally gathered my courage and asked if I might handle them, one earring covered my palm. It was too big to hide when I closed my fingers.

In May, when I first saw the emeralds, Fred Leighton and his staff, including Rebecca Selva, a striking woman from El Salvador, who handles clients who on Madison Avenue pass for royalty (Nicole Kidman, Sarah Jessica Parker), believed that the earrings *had* been meant for a queen: Elizabeth Farnese, the plain, long-nosed niece of the Duke of Parma. In 1714, at twenty-one, Elizabeth married Philip V of Spain, who was thirty. After the marriage was consummated, on Christmas Eve, Philip declared himself Elizabeth's "slave for life." The Queen developed a reputation for intransigence; the King was given to melancholia. Philip also had financial problems: the recently concluded War of the Spanish Succession had cost Spain many of its territories, and while for two centuries the Spanish court had been enriched by the fleets, composed of several dozen ships, that sailed annually to the New World, only a few ships had sailed from 1702 to 1711. That Christmas, the King was awaiting the return of a fleet that would replenish his coffers and furnish his new queen with jewels.

The Galeones de Tierra Firme fleet had set sail for Colombia, to pick up jewels from the Muzo and Chivor emerald mines, in the dense jungle region north of Bogotá. By 1567, the Spanish had wrested control of the mines from the Muzo Indians, who had kept their location secret for centuries. They forced captive Indians to work the mines until, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, harsh labor conditions and disease had decimated the population. "Muzo and Chivor produced the finest emeralds in the world," Rebecca Selva told me when I visited Fred Leighton. "The mines are fabled. These beautiful things come out of a very dark period of Latin-American history."

In September, 1714, the Galeones fleet sailed to Havana, and waited there for the New Spain Flota, which had left for Mexico in 1712 with orders for textiles and porcelain from the Far East (sent overland through Veracruz), as well as for gold, silver, and jewels. The boats also carried newly minted currency, cocoa, vanilla, paper, brazilwood, and animal hides. The official manifests, sent ahead to Spain, did not account for all of the goods on board: twenty per cent—the "Royal Fifth"—would be claimed as taxes, and many merchants bribed officials to underestimate their cargo. According to the ships' manifests, General Don Juan Estéban de Ubilla, the captain of the New Spain Flota, carried treasure for the Queen on the lead ship, La Capitana.

On July 24, 1715, the combined fleet, eleven boats in all, plus the Grifon, a French ship, which was sailing with the heavily armed fleet for protection from pirates, set off into the Straits of Florida. It was hurricane season. The three-masted galleons were up to a hundred and sixty feet long and forty-five feet wide, and held several hundred passengers and crew. A storm hit on July 30th. By early the next morning, all eleven boats in the fleet had been lost, propelled shoreward onto the jagged worm-rock reefs that edge the coast of southeast Florida. More than a thousand men drowned. According to the manifests, fourteen million pesos (the modern equivalent of about two hundred million dollars) in treasure was lost. Only the Grifon escaped.

Shortly thereafter, Spain sent crews that forced the local Ais Indians to try to salvage the treasure. The attempt was only partially successful, and the salvagers burned what was left of the wrecks above the surface. People well acquainted with the 1715 Fleet, including divers who have spent decades exploring the wrecks, say that many of the jewels of extreme grandeur—the kind that made the French sneer at the Spanish court for its ostentation—which have been recovered came from the Cabin Wreck site, where La Capitana went down, about fifty feet off Orchid Beach, in Sebastian Inlet, Florida. The remains of the ships were scattered between Fort Pierce and Sebastian, on the so-called Treasure Coast.

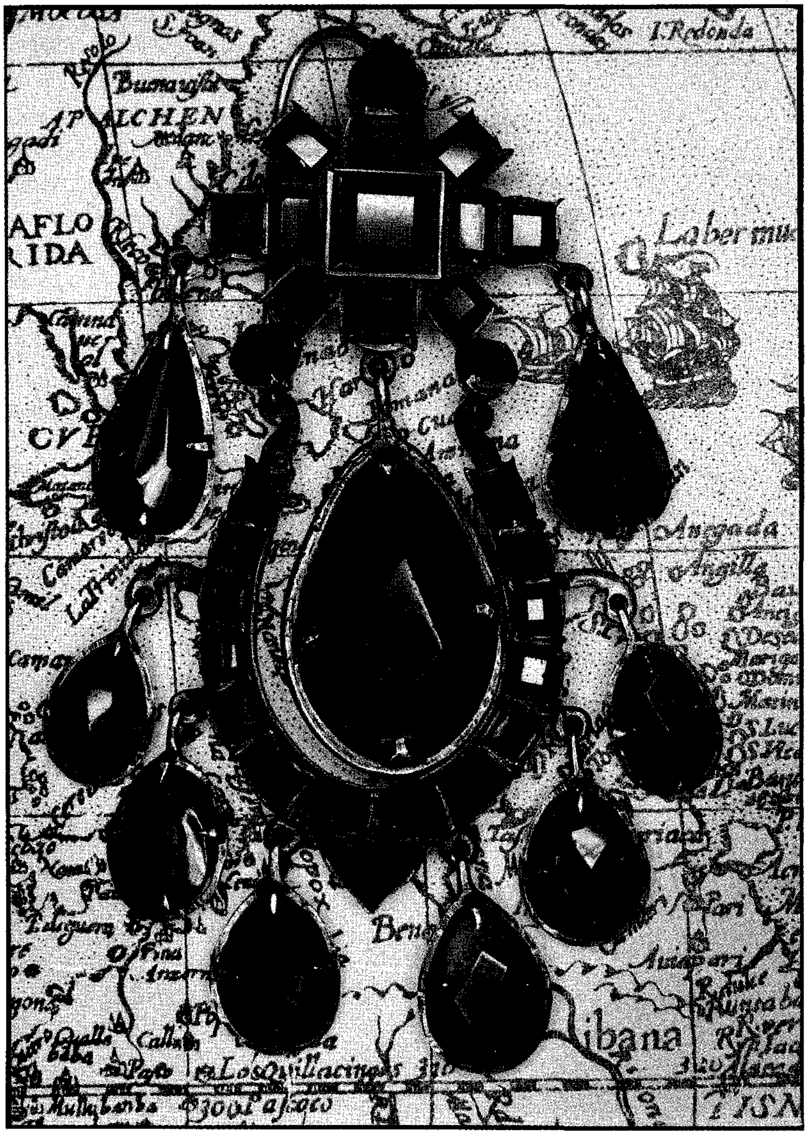
Fred Leighton is accustomed to regal gems of complicated provenance. In October of last year, in Christie's "Magnificent Jewels" sale, in New York, Leighton sold a two-hundred-carat diamond brooch called the Tudor Rose, which had belonged to Princess Mathilde Bonaparte and later to Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt. Leighton had bought the brooch in a Milan jewelry shop, in the seventies, for around $250,000. It sold for $701,900 at the auction. One afternoon, over lunch, I asked Leighton if he'd handled sunken treasure before. He narrowed his eyes, then said, "No, this is my first wreck."

The emeralds came to him by a circuitous route. In the fall of 2004, Larry Goldberg, who, with his cousin, owns Ira and Larry Goldberg Coins and Collectibles, in Beverly Hills, got a call from Dwight Manley, a sports agent with a side interest in coins, who lives in Newport Beach. Manley told Goldberg that a woman named Bridget Anderson had called him and said that she had some coins and emerald jewelry that her husband, Dick Anderson, had found on a shipwreck.

Goldberg told me, "Manley got me on the phone and said, 'This gal is crazy, she's coming over with treasure.' Newport's about an hour away. I got there in under an hour." In Manley's office, Anderson began pulling bags of gold and silver coins from a wooden case. Some of the coins, she said, were from the 1715 Fleet; others, about a hundred of them, were from the Nuestra Señora de las Maravillas, a Spanish galleon that had sunk off the Bahamas in 1656. The Maravilla is regarded as one of the greatest treasure ships of all time; there has long been a rumor, discounted by most historians, that it carried a life-size solid-gold Madonna in its hold. The Maravilla (but not the Madonna) was found in 1972 by a diver and explorer named Robert Marx.

Anderson also showed the men a gold pendant; a locket, which held a diamond ring decorated with the figure of a pirate with peg legs; three gold nuggets, the largest of which, weighing eight hundred and twenty-two grams, had been sawed in half; and clusters of silver coins, covered with a black sulfide patina, which is typical of coins left underwater. And there was the emerald jewelry, with a battered silver box. Larry Goldberg is a voluble man, but when he got to the emeralds he paused. "You know, I looked for years for a very nice emerald for my wife," he said. "These emeralds are not what I have. They're old emeralds, and they look like they were made for a queen."

Both Goldberg and his jeweller, Tony Magnemi, recall Anderson's saying that her husband had recovered the emeralds from the 1715 Fleet, in the nineteen-seventies. Anderson told them that she had held on to the emeralds for almost thirty years, but now her husband, Dick, was dying, of Lou Gehrig's disease. Dick Anderson was well known in diving circles. In 1953, at twenty-one, he had repaired equipment on the set of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea"; later he was on



"In thirty-five years, I've never seen emeralds like these," the jeweller Fred Leighton said. Photograph by Ruven Afanador.

the crew of "Jaws" (he was the divemaster). He held a mining claim in the Sacramento Valley, and, in the late sixties, Rolex made him a solid-gold watch out of his own ore. In 2004, he was inducted into the International Scuba Diving Hall of Fame. He married Bridget, who is his second wife, in 1975; she is the daughter of Hal Roach, the producer of the "Our Gang" comedies, and grew up in Hollywood.

Goldberg asked Bridget Anderson to bring the emeralds to his office—he wanted Magnemi to take a look at them. After Magnemi had examined the jewels, he, like Goldberg, felt sure that they had been made for royalty. Magnemi also told Anderson, whom Goldberg describes as "a nice lady in her early fifties, who plays tennis," that it wasn't only the stones that were valuable; it was the story. She agreed to place the coins with Goldberg, provided that he help her dispose of the emeralds.

"My expertise is coins, not jewelry," Goldberg said. "I told her, though, that I thought the emeralds had to be sold privately. They were too unusual to sell at auction." Anderson agreed; according to Goldberg, she said that the last thing she wanted was publicity.

Magnemi called several museums, a jeweller in Beverly Hills, and Fred Leighton. The first jeweller named a figure. When Goldberg demurred, he doubled his offer, but it was still too low. Leighton asked Magnemi to send him the emeralds so that he could see them. The idea made Goldberg nervous, but he agreed. "So we Brinked them out, and he fell for them," Goldberg said.

Anderson provided two authentication reports that she and her husband had commissioned. One, by Frank Preusser & Associates, saw nothing inconsistent with the claim that the jewelry had been "found in a heavily corroded silver box in a shipwreck of one of the galleons of the Spanish 1715 Fleet." There were no signs that modern tools had been used on either the box or the jewelry; the box was covered with layers of dried marine life, and there was no evidence of artificial aging. An appraisal by Cosmo Altobelli, the president of Altobelli Jewelers, concurred:

> One emerald was removed from its bezel-mount setting (closed back) to determine its true color and characteristics. Black silver sulfide residue was apparent in the recess under the gemstone. This . . . adds credence to the probability of a centuries-long seawater immersion, within the deteriorating silver box.

Altobelli noted that although there was no way to authenticate the exact origin of the jewels, examination by microscope indicated that the emeralds were probably mined in Colombia, and that the set resembled in great degree similar items that have been retrieved from Spanish galleons. He concluded:

> In addition to the merits of each individual piece in this collection, the fact that it is an intact suite, complete with its original silver container, makes it unique in the field of recovered treasures. I have not encountered any recovery that approaches this suite in its overall grandeur.

"Let's go back to the scenario in which none of this is my fault."

The earrings alone persuaded Leighton to buy the collection. He bought it outright from Anderson, with whom he negotiated directly. Goldberg took a commission and put the coins and other objects up for auction. Only a few things didn't sell: some small gold coins and the sawed-off half of a gold nugget. Goldberg said that when he asked Anderson about the gold nugget, she told him that her husband had been involved in a lawsuit with the government to establish his ownership of the emeralds: in lieu of fees, his lawyer had taken half of the gold nugget.

The first time I went to see the emeralds, I arrived just before eleven o'clock, when the shop usually opens. The staff had almost finished retrieving the display jewelry from the safe, but the counters were still strewn with jewels, and I was directed to a chair in the center of the room from which it was impossible for me to touch anything. When Rebecca Selva came in, she was wearing a nineteenth-century green enamel snake bracelet, set with ruby eyes, and a pair of white enamel and rose-cut diamond earrings. "These?" she said, when I remarked on them, touching her ears. "I wear them on the subway."

The emeralds were in a gray suede tray on the table. I reached for them. "When you pick them up," Selva cautioned, "hold them over the tray." Unlike diamonds, emeralds are fragile. She said, "The Queen was from Parma. She wasn't a simpleton. You have to understand the importance of gemstones. People cross the ocean for them. The last emerald Mr. Leighton sold was the largest carved Mogul emerald to be sold at auction—four hundred and thirty carats. It had belonged to Vita Sackville-

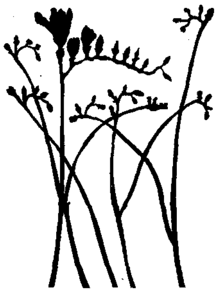
West's mother." She walked to a doorway and called, "Alma, bring me the box of the emerald treasure!" The box, which is splintering, is five inches long, three inches high, and three inches wide. Selva said, "The emeralds are *va-va-voom*. Only Meryl Streep has tried them on."

Leighton will sell the emeralds only as a set. They are priced at $2.1 million. "Now we're just waiting for the right person to come along," he told me at lunch. "It's going to surprise us." His eyes glazed over slightly. "In thirty-five years, I've never seen emeralds like these. I wasn't at court with Isabella."

Fred Leighton was born Murray Mondschein. His father was a cabdriver, and his mother stayed home. He attended P.S. 52, in the Bronx, graduated from Evander Childs High School, and went into the Army. Back in New York, in 1959, he bought a store on the corner of MacDougal and Eighth Streets which sold Mexican artifacts. It was called Fred Leighton. "I'd always been interested in offbeat things, and I'd spoken to the owner about buying it," he said. When the owner died, his lawyer found Murray Mondschein's name in his papers and called. Fred Leighton—the original—had owed eight thousand dollars in back rent. "The warehouse was filled with the worst kind of Mexican arts and crafts," Leighton recalled. "But soon we began to hustle the good stuff." Leighton imported Mexican wedding dresses, which were then popular with young women who spurned their mother's peau de soie. And he began to carry Mexican and Native American silver jewelry. "Then a Victorian jewelry dealer gave me some to sell," he said. "A little ring was five hundred dollars." Leighton began making buying trips to England; for ten thousand dollars, he could fill a shoebox. In 1974, he moved the store uptown, and got rid of the dresses. By then, he had legally changed his name. "Downtown, we had the mothers, the aunts, trying on the dresses. It was meshuga. We're not Kleinfeld. But people who love jewelry find us. The emeralds did."

Leighton told me that what matters to him is what he calls the "wow factor." He tries to buy only from "reliable people," and he always has items appraised. He reads Interpol lists to try to make sure that jewels offered to him haven't been stolen. "But, with jewelry, sometimes you never know what the hell it is," he said.

A week later, at seven-thirty on a hot mid-June morning, I met John Brandon in the parking lot of the Riverside Marina in Fort Pierce, Florida. Brandon has been diving for treasure, primarily from the 1715 Fleet, for decades, and spends a considerable portion of his life underwater. He usually starts at six-thirty; the late departure was for me. When I first contacted Brandon about going out on his boat, the Endeavor, the only question he'd asked was whether Cuban sandwiches would be all right for lunch; along with everyone else I met in southeast Florida, he took my interest in treasure-hunting for granted.

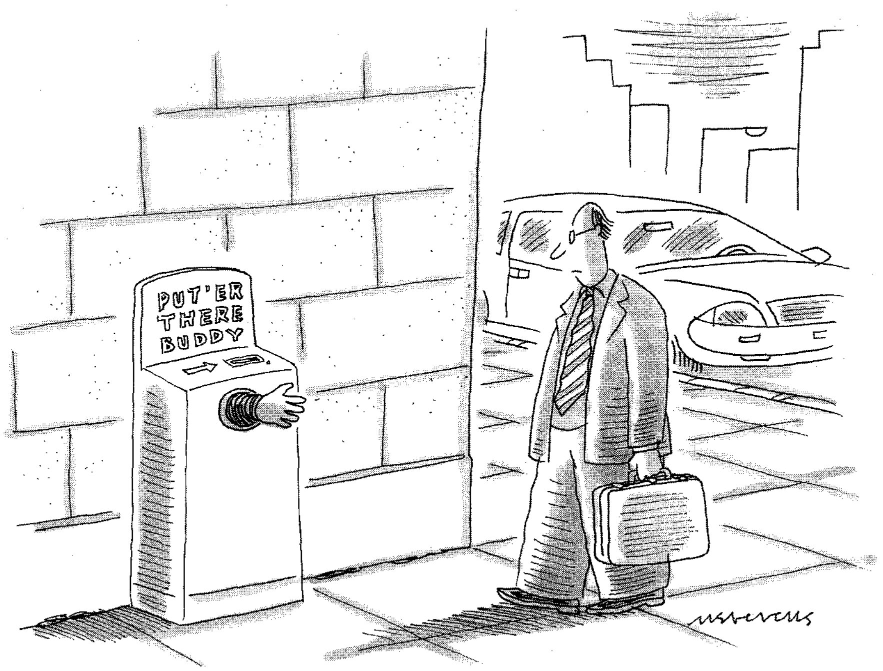


Brandon, who is fifty-two, has a red beard and a short ponytail. He wears a gold escudo on a chain around his neck, a wedding band, and two rings from the 1715 Fleet: one a heavy gold ring he found in 1985 and the other set with a gold coin. He grew up in Fort Pierce, found his first silver coin on the beach when he was thirteen, and started diving at sixteen. He was eager to get going that morning; it would be one of the few times he'd been back on the wreck since the previous summer, following an exceptional year of hurricane weather. (Because of the storms this fall, he has hardly been out, though he has had a few days of good luck.) Storms tend to turn up stuff, Brandon told me; after a northeaster in 1984, three thousand silver coins washed up just north of Vero Beach. With Brandon were two crew members, Tim McGuire and Randy Badger. Brandon has a lot of faith in his crew, but when I asked him how he knows if someone he hires is honest—not liable, that is, to hide gold coins under his tongue—he said, "I don't."

In Florida, it is a third-degree felony to excavate an underwater shipwreck without a permit. For centuries, wrecks were subject to admiralty law, which codified the practice of "finders keepers." But by the early sixties, when several ships from the 1715 Fleet were found, that had begun to change. A series of laws established the state's rights to wrecks, and its interest in preserving their cultural value. The 1987 Abandoned Shipwreck Act gives title over several categories of shipwreck to the states. Salvors must request permission from the state to work on these shipwrecks. Florida also requires salvors to use nautical-positioning devices to record the precise location of a find (currently, to a radius of four or five feet). Every item has to be catalogued; nothing, no matter how negligible, can be thrown away, and all logs must be archived. There are special instructions for human remains. Recently, when Spain claimed two Spanish military ships, which sank in 1750 and 1802, off the coast of Virginia, an appellate court ruled in its favor; but it is unclear whether this would apply to foreign commercial vessels. Other questions, such as whether treasure wrested from South America should be repatriated, remain unresolved.

In Florida, salvagers are issued yearly contracts to excavate shipwreck sites, with the proviso that twenty per cent of any find is owed to the state—the State's Fifth. The remaining loot belongs to the salvage company, which distributes it among owners, investors, and divers according to an intricate system called "the division." Brandon, who is a particularly successful treasure seeker, estimates that the total amount he has retained, through the division, is about seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Treasure-hunting is expensive, however. Brandon's yearly outlays, including fuel, repairs, and payroll, come to about seventy-five thousand dollars. The most treasure the Endeavor has retrieved in one day was worth half a million dollars: on July 28, 1982, after more than a hundred dives, Brandon and his crew recovered, among other artifacts, five 22k. gold bars, twenty-four gold escudos, and ten large chunks of gold.

Seven of the galleons that made up the 1715 Fleet have been found; four others remain lost. That day, Brandon was heading for the Douglass Beach Wreck, south of Fort Pierce. Three pelicans flew by the Endeavor's bow. Brandon said, "What we're always trying to find is a dispersal pattern within a shipwreck's debris field. It's like tracking an animal in the woods. You find a bone, or a track, or a nutshell in a cairn, but you can be a hundred or



even a thousand feet away. Usually, if people stick to it they'll make a few bucks. You start at the bottom and you work your way up." We were moving at about sixteen knots. The blue sky was a Technicolor dream. I asked Brandon if he had seen "The Life Aquatic." He grinned, and said, "I couldn't."

The Endeavor is minimally equipped. It has a cooler. A sign above the tiny galley asks, "Have You Flogged Your Crew Today?" The boat carries G.P.S. equipment and a logbook, which is kept by hand. On its stern are two huge elbow-shaped pipes, called blowers, which displace sand that might be covering objects on the ocean floor. Divers call this "blowing a hole" (archeologists prefer "excavating a unit"). In the course of a summer, the Endeavor blows between a thousand and fifteen hundred holes. Brandon had marked the site of the wreck with a buoy. A hundred yards away, a lone man was combing the beach with a metal detector. "If we don't find anything, we'll go take his stuff," McGuire said.

That day, Brandon spent about five hours, in five-to-six-minute intervals, in the water, at a depth of about fifteen feet. He wore a heavy red polyvinyl-chloride glove on one hand; the other was bare, for retrieving delicate objects. Over his ears he wore a metal-detector headset. "When I was a kid, you only had your eyes," he said. "Now if I swim over something it sings. Of course, it helps if I can see it."

But, once he climbed down the boat's ladder, he couldn't see more than a foot in front of him. It was like diving into a bottle of ink. When he popped up again, he was holding a beer can. "This area has been excavated for forty years. But the reef is full of pockets. You could find an emerald ring," he said, and threw the can on board.

Brandon submerged again. When he surfaced, he was holding a small shard of tarnished metal and a 1989 dime. "Look—cash on the barrelhead," he said, holding up the coin. The thin, arrowhead-shaped shard, which McGuire recorded as find No. 67604, turned out to be from the rim of a silver plate. ("The State of Florida will know within a metre where that shard of plate was found," he said.) At eleven-twenty, Brandon brought up a silver eight-real coin (No. 67605). It was the most valuable find of the day, worth about six to eight hundred dollars. We had been on the boat, in the sun, for four hours. He looked at me. "Drink some water," he said. "Treasure-finding is exciting, but treasure-hunting is boring."

We came back to the marina at four-thirty, and went to the Harbor Cove bar. Brandon knows the regulars, and when he walked in he gave his report: "Not too much. Bit of plate and an eight-real." He shrugged. When he was halfway through the first of four rum-and-Cokes, I pulled out a photograph of the emeralds and handed it to him.

He looked at the photograph for a long moment, then whistled. I asked him if he remembered the emeralds from among the items recovered from the 1715 Fleet. He looked at the photograph again. "You have any other pictures?" he asked. I reached into my bag for Larry Goldberg's auction catalogue. Brandon focussed on the locket and chain; he didn't recognize them, either. "Can you tell me who found this stuff?" he asked. Then he shook his head. "Shit, I don't want to know."

I told him it was a man named Dick Anderson. He said, "As far as I know, no Dick Anderson worked on the 1715." He added, "Dick Anderson—he's a diver. He was with Bob Marx on the Maravilla." He looked at the photograph of the emeralds again. Don Porter, a diver who is sixty-nine years old and has been involved with the 1715 Fleet since 1966, was sitting at a table with a woman who had waist-length black hair. They were both wearing medallions made of Spanish coins. Brandon showed Porter the picture. "You ever seen these off the 1715 Fleet?" Porter was deeply tanned, with the kind of lines you get if you spend most of a century out in the sun. He looked at the photograph. "Nope," he said.

Brandon turned back to me. Hundreds of people have worked on these wrecks, he said. But if the emeralds were from the 1715 Fleet they would be among the top-ten items ever retrieved from it, and if they were found legally the state would probably have a record of them. "That doesn't mean it's impossible. He could have found them on the beach, in the bushes, in the woods. He could have found them on the beach in the 1979 hurricane," Brandon said. "These earrings take your breath away. It's why you keep going back. An Indian artisan made these earrings by candlelight. He knew they were beautiful. There's blood on this stuff—it starts with blood and money." He took a sip of his drink, and said, "When you get down to it, no one can tell you it's not from the 1715 Fleet."

Brandon looked at my hand. "See

that?" he said, pointing to the gold rings on my fourth finger. The top one is a lattice band that belonged to a great-aunt. "Gold has been melted down forever. That gold could have come from Pharaoh's tomb."

The next morning, I went to see Bill Moore, the operations-systems manager of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum, in Sebastian. (The Fishers are a legendary treasure-hunting family.) The museum, which is housed in a long, low building on the Indian River Lagoon, displays finds from the 1715 Fleet. Bill Moore began his career as an oil-rig diver. At fifty-six, he has horn-rimmed glasses and an Ichabod Crane stoop. He spent seven years transferring the data in the old logs kept by salvage vessels to computer spreadsheets. "It wasn't easy," Moore said. "Longitude and latitude are not perfectly square. The world is not perfectly round." He shrugged, then smiled. "It's as close as we're going to get."

Computer-generated maps are a product of Bill Moore's work. On one, which looks like a picture of mitochondria under a microscope, there are thousands of circles that show where divers have gone down in search of treasure from the 1715 Fleet, marked red for where they found gold, blue for silver, and gray—which covers most of the page—for nothing. It's a map of hope and exasperation. Moore clicked on a blue circle: a piece of eight was found on the Douglass Beach Wreck on July 8, 1998, by the Endeavor. On another map, of the Cabin Wreck site, red circles cluster like roses where General Ubilla's stateroom hit the reef, and the dark figure of the scatter pattern of finds from the ruined galleon is elongated underwater like the shadow of a whale.

In the museum, Moore showed me a palm-size butterfly brooch set with diamonds, a gold crucifix, and a gold cup. I showed him my photograph of Fred Leighton's emeralds. "From which 1715 Fleet?" he asked. "There's never been anything like this off the wrecks that I know of."

The records that commercial salvagers now keep of their finds are given to the Bureau of Archeological Research and Archives, in Tallahassee. James Levy, the historic conservator at the bureau, has worked there for thirty-five years. When I called to ask about the emeralds, Levy said he didn't know of their ever having passed through the bureau.

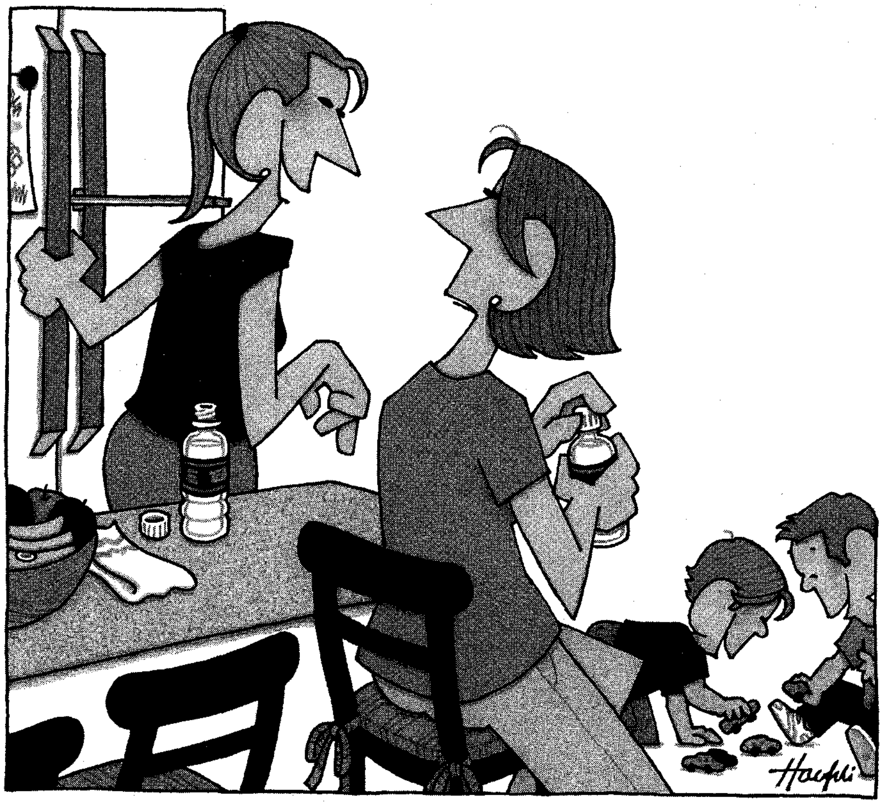
"It's unusual to find pairs of things," Levy said. "Something like that would be amazing." He added, "Most of these people you're talking to, they're nice folks. And they're all pirates, to the last one. They'd make you walk the plank for a handful of gold dust."

Levy told me that he would ask at the bureau if anyone knew about the emeralds. When he called back, an hour later, the answer was no. Compared with most finds, the emeralds seemed to have come from nowhere.

Robert Marx, who found the Maravilla in 1972, lives up the coast from Sebastian and Fort Pierce. I had driven there to see him, but I couldn't find his house. When I called, he said, "I'll stand *in front* of the house." Marx has spent his whole life finding things, and it annoys him when other people can't. When he was a boy, in Pittsburgh, he attached chewing gum to a stick and fished for coins under drain grates. Marx has written more than sixty books about treasure-seeking and underwater archeology. Wrecks he has worked on include the City of Port Royal, off Jamaica (featured in the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean"), and the Nuestra Señora de los Milagros, off Quintana Roo, Mexico. He was knighted for his service to Spain, for duplicating Columbus's voyage. It took him almost twelve years to find the Maravilla.

Marx is in his late sixties, and though he had heart surgery last year, he is still formidable. Upright, he has the lumbering gait of a bear; seated, the vexed look of someone with ferocious energy who's been sidelined. Jenifer Marx, his fifth wife, to whom he has been married for thirty-five years, is a tall, poised woman in her early sixties, and is herself an accomplished diver—she also worked on the Maravilla. We all looked at a picture of the emeralds. "These aren't from the 1715 Fleet," Marx said. He added, "Treasure is trouble; the more treasure, the more trouble." Then he told me a story.

One night in the late sixties, in the midst of his search for the Maravilla, Marx attended a dinner at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, where his third wife, Mary, was a showgirl. He regaled the guests—according to Marx, they included Frank Sinatra and Sammy Davis, Jr.—with the



"How sophisticated is Jeremy's palate?"

story of the ship. Some of them told him that they wanted to come in as investors. They wrote out a letter of intent on a napkin, which he signed. A week later, Marx said, he changed his mind, and when the potential investors called he told them, "Fuck you."

In August of 1972, Marx and another diver, Willard Bascom, found the Maravilla, off Little Bahama Bank. Among the first finds were a bronze gun decorated with leaping dolphins, silver bars weighing eighty pounds, and hundreds of silver spoons. That November, some of the treasure was deposited in Nassau, at the Royal Bank of Canada; the next day, Marx read in the local paper that he had been accused of stealing gold that belonged to the Bahamas. His salvage permit was revoked. Infuriated, Marx returned to Miami, where, during a press conference, he accused Lynden Pindling, the Prime Minister of the Bahamas, of double-dealing. Eventually, a settlement was reached, but with the stipulation that Marx could not be present for any further expeditions on the Maravilla site. "It killed him," Jenifer Marx told me.

Marx hired Dick Anderson to take his place. They'd met as teen-agers in California, at the L.A. Neptunes diving club, and had been friends for years. "Quest for Treasure," a book that Marx wrote about the Maravilla, includes a chapter written by Dick Anderson, "Anderson's Story." In it, Anderson mentions searching for emeralds. Marx's only comment in the pages that follow is that when the expedition went out again, in 1974, Anderson wasn't available. "The guy was a great diver," Marx told me. "I took him out on the Maravilla, and he went crazy."

Jenifer Marx brought in a tray of cold drinks. Marx took one. In 1974, he said, he was contacted by a representative of the people from the dinner at Caesars Palace. He was shown cancelled checks that they said he had signed. (Marx claims that they were forged.) They told him that he owed them treasure. After a legal battle, the case was settled. A few years ago, Marx said, he ran into the widow of one of the men involved in the case. She told him, "You broke my husband's heart. You stole his treasure."

In the past decade or so, Marx has sold treasure from the Maravilla, mainly through Christie's, for hundreds of thousands of dollars. He had already heard about the sale of the emeralds to Fred Leighton. Now, sitting in his study, it was clear that, to him, the emeralds had become a coda to his story of his wreck—the Maravilla.

After leaving Marx's house, I stopped at the beach. Every summer, I go with my family to the ocean. I've found crab claws and sand dollars. That afternoon, about a hundred yards from where Ubilla's ship went down, I found a bottle tab, a blond wig, and some tiny seashells. To my chagrin, I realized that I was looking for something.

The dimly lit private viewing room in the back at Fred Leighton has black lacquered walls, decorated with iridescent fish. One day this summer, I sat at a table, and Leighton sat across from me. The emeralds were between us, a little Oz. I had been reading about emeralds. Hermes, the messenger, wrote on an emerald tablet; when Satan fell from Heaven, an emerald dropped from his crown; Nero watched the gladiator games through an emerald lens.

I had asked to try on the earrings. There was a mirror on the wall. Leighton was speaking. His voice was caressing, almost hypnotic. It wasn't the first time he had watched a woman fall in love with a pair of emeralds. The earrings had opened a new vein of desire, of which I was vaguely ashamed.

Leighton said, "As you know, the really extraordinary part of the collection is the earrings. Some emeralds turn dark in certain light, but these stay clear." He handed them to me. I took off the small diamond studs I usually wear and threaded the heavy gold wires of the earrings through the holes in my lobes.

Leighton and I looked together at my reflection in the mirror. He said, "These will be bought with love more than with greed or avarice. You can always get a big diamond. They are always coming out of the earth." He turned away from the mirror and back to me, and said, "Women should have jewels."

Larry Goldberg had told me that Bridget Anderson wasn't interested in talking, and for weeks she did not respond to my attempts to contact her. Then, one afternoon, a few hours after I spoke to her husband's former wife—who didn't remember his having worked on the 1715 Fleet—she called. She had heard about that conversation, and she wasn't happy. "Maybe you should ask someone who knows," she said.

Her husband did not find the emeralds himself, she said; she had never told Goldberg or Leighton that he had. According to Anderson, all she ever said was that she thought the jewelry was probably from the 1715 Fleet. In 1975, she said, her husband bought the emeralds, in Palm Beach, from a diver who told him that they were from the 1715 Fleet. She didn't remember the diver's name, and she wouldn't tell me what her husband had paid for them. I asked her about the Maravilla. "Bob Marx is the biggest bullshitter on the planet," she said. "Dick never felt he got his fair share from the Maravilla." If she had known for sure what ship the emeralds had come from, she said, she could have obtained a better price for them. She said that when her husband first showed the emeralds around, in the seventies, "people said, 'Brass and glass, brass and glass, I'll give you fifty dollars for it.' " She added, "I wish I could tell you there was a really interesting story—there is no story. When we went to Fred Leighton, we could have said anything. The jewelry isn't even mine anymore—I keep my doors unlocked, and I want to keep it that way. It was sold to Fred Leighton. He has the papers."

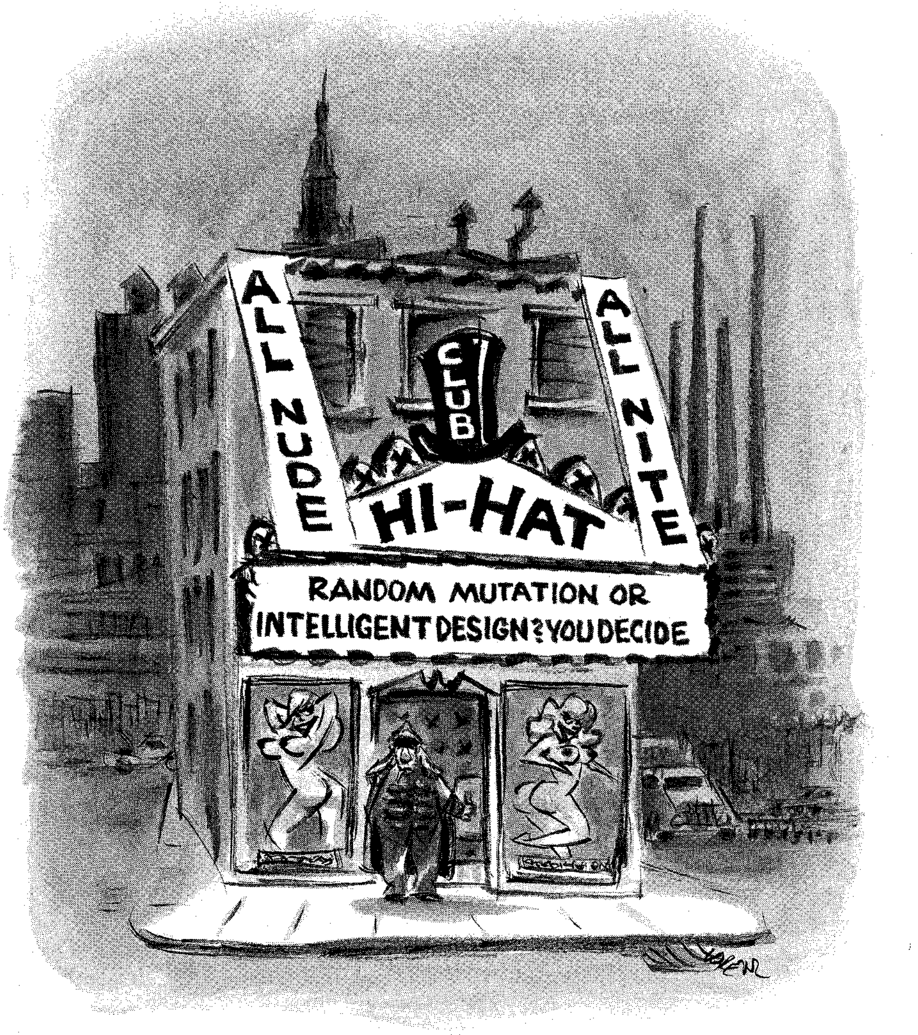
The papers that Fred Leighton had given to me were the appraisers' reports; an affidavit, signed by Richard Anderson, stating that he was the rightful owner of the jewelry; and three yellowed copies of *Aquarius*, a diving magazine. In the December, 1974, issue, there is an article called "The Gold Dust Kid," with a photograph of a skinny, grinning Anderson wearing a triple-length, seventeenth-century gold chain, from the Maravilla.

I told Rebecca Selva about my conversation with Bridget Anderson. "What Mr. Leighton was told," Selva said, "was that Anderson was a diver and he recovered the emeralds.” She called Leighton’s lawyer, and then faxed me more papers, including a jewelry-purchase agreement, dated December, 2004, between Fred Leighton and Richard Anderson. It explained that the jewels had been held by the United States government but had been returned to Anderson. There was also a settlement agreement between Anderson and the government, dated March 25, 1993. This was the case that Bridget Anderson had mentioned to Goldberg (although she denied telling him that the lawyer had been paid with half a gold nugget). As it turned out, the government’s concern wasn’t that the emeralds had been illegally taken from the 1715 Fleet or from the Maravilla but that they had been smuggled from Panama.

In the nineteen-eighties, the United States Customs Bureau in Southern California had become concerned about the smuggling of antique artifacts from Latin America. In 1987, federal agents seized a set of emerald-and-gold jewelry belonging to Richard Anderson. The Los Angeles *Times*, reporting the story in October of that year, noted that “agents . . . are trying to sort out its history.” An accompanying photograph shows a federal agent with the earrings.

Anderson had been trying to sell the earrings privately. He told potential buyers—including, in May, 1987, an undercover customs agent—that he had recovered the emeralds from a wrecked Spanish galleon, La Boticera, on a Panamanian reef. He also said that he had retrieved the jewelry without any Panamanian permits, and that he’d hidden them in his suitcase when he reëntered the United States. At that point, the agent arrested him.

Anderson’s defense, according to documents filed in the Central District Court in Los Angeles, was that he had bought the emeralds in Florida in 1975, from an unnamed individual. He claimed that he’d made up the story about the Panamanian wreck to enhance their value; during the time he had said he was in Panama diving for emeralds, he was actually working for Universal Pictures in the Bahamas. For details on the wreck, he said, he consulted a book by Robert Marx. The witness list that Anderson submitted included “Paul (last name unknown),” Bridget Anderson, Robert Marx, and “Employees of Jaws, The Revenge.”



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The prosecutor in the case was Lee Arian, who was then an Assistant United States Attorney for the Central District of California. Arian told me that although there was a concern that “the emeralds were taken out of international waters without appropriate permits,” the smuggling charge could not be proved. According to the settlement agreement, Anderson kept the pendant, the two rings, and the sixteen unstrung emerald links; the government retained the earrings. Bridget Anderson said that the earrings were then acquired by a third party and eventually returned to Dick Anderson.

When I asked Arian why Anderson had been allowed to keep any part of the emerald set, he told me, “Anderson was an interesting guy, a fascinating guy. His *story* was fascinating. I remember thinking it was not entirely fair that this guy should, well, end up with nothing. . . . We did what we felt was legitimately fair under the circumstances.” He added, “He seemed like a good guy. He didn’t seem like anyone we had to be too concerned about.”

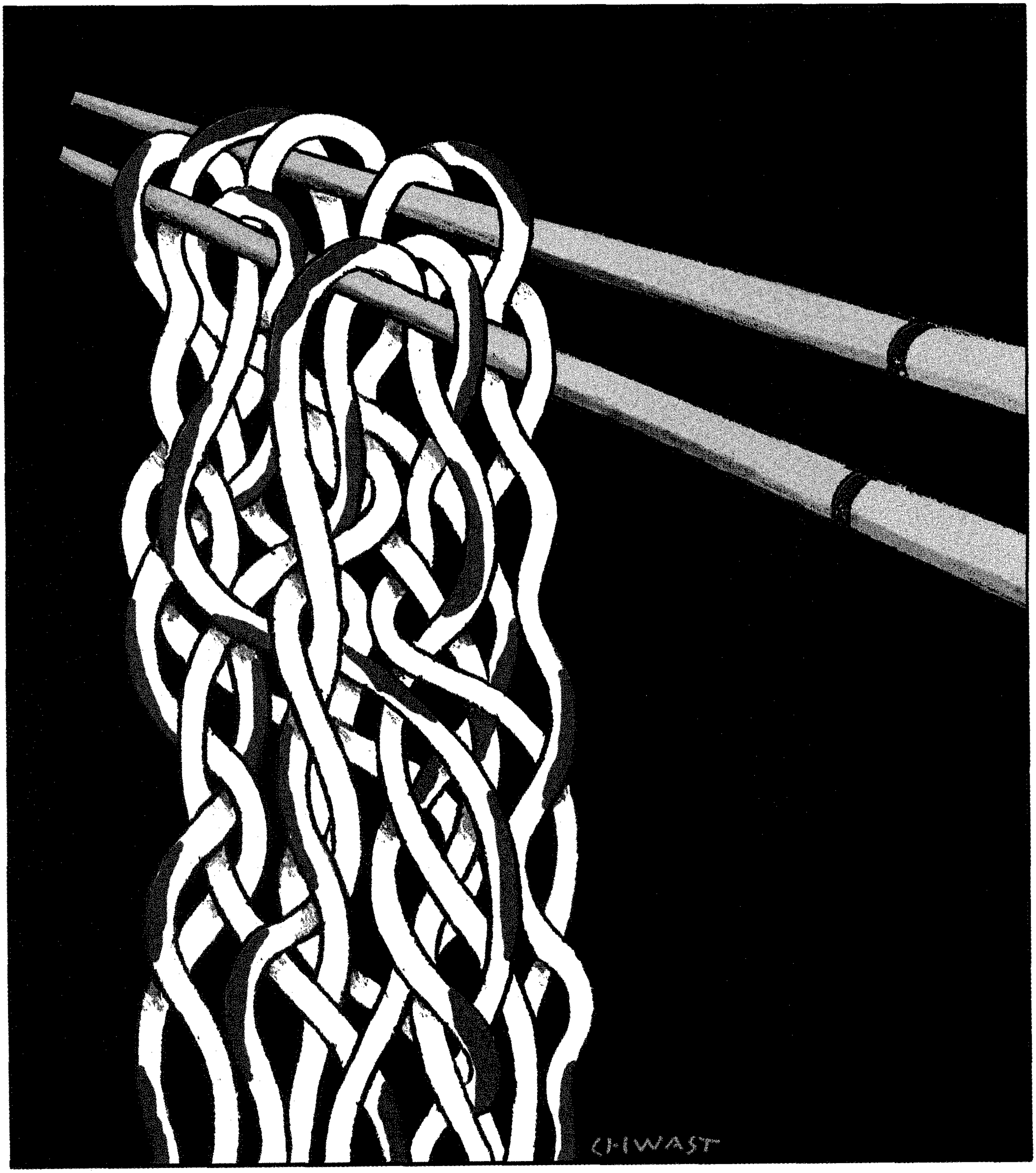
After I spoke to Bridget Anderson and Lee Arian, I called Fred Leighton. I told him what they had told me, and asked him if it changed how he felt about the emeralds. He laughed. “Not at all,” he said. “Those emeralds have had a hectic life. Dealing with antiques, there are places where history stops, then picks up again. The person who buys them will make up another story.”

On a hot August morning, when the Madison Avenue sidewalks were almost deserted, I returned to Fred Leighton to look at the emeralds once more. In the aqueous light of the store, the stones looked like seawater. “Why do people buy jewelry?” Leighton said to me, before I knew. “It’s nice to have something portable.” ♦

FICTION

THE YEAR OF SPAGHETTI

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI



Nineteen-seventy-one was the Year of Spaghetti.

In 1971, I cooked spaghetti to live, and lived to cook spaghetti. Steam rising from the pot was my pride and joy, tomato sauce bubbling up in the saucepan my one great hope in life.

I went to a cooking specialty store and bought a kitchen timer and a huge aluminum pot, big enough to bathe a German shepherd in, then went around to all the supermarkets that catered to foreigners, gathering an assortment of odd-sounding spices. I picked up a pasta cookbook at the bookstore, and bought tomatoes by the dozen. I purchased every brand of spaghetti I could lay my hands on, simmered every sauce known to man. Fine particles of garlic, onion, and olive oil swirled in the air, forming a harmonious cloud that penetrated every corner of my tiny apartment, permeating the floor and the ceiling and the walls, my clothes, my books, my records, my tennis racquet, my bundles of old letters. It was a fragrance one might have smelled on ancient Roman aqueducts.

This is a story from the Year of Spaghetti, 1971 A.D.

As a rule, I cooked spaghetti, and ate it, by myself. I was convinced that spaghetti was a dish best enjoyed alone. I can't really explain why I felt that way, but there it is.

I always drank tea with my spaghetti and ate a simple lettuce-and-cucumber salad. I'd make sure I had plenty of both. I laid everything out neatly on the table and enjoyed a leisurely meal, glancing at the paper as I ate. From Sunday to Saturday, one Spaghetti Day followed another. And each new Sunday started a brand-new Spaghetti Week.

Every time I sat down to a plate of spaghetti—especially on a rainy afternoon—I had the distinct feeling that somebody was about to knock on my door. The person who I imagined was about to visit me was different each time. Sometimes it was a stranger, sometimes someone I knew. Once, it was a girl with slim legs whom I'd dated in high school, and once it was myself, from a few years back, come to pay a visit. Another time, it was William Holden, with Jennifer Jones on his arm.

SEYMOUR CHWAST

William Holden?

Not one of these people, however, actually ventured into my apartment. They hovered just outside the door, without knocking, like fragments of memory, and then slipped away.

Spring, summer, and fall, I cooked and cooked, as if cooking spaghetti were an act of revenge. Like a lonely, jilted girl throwing old love letters into the fireplace, I tossed one handful of spaghetti after another into the pot.

I'd gather up the trampled-down shadows of time, knead them into the shape of a German shepherd, toss them into the roiling water, and sprinkle them with salt. Then I'd hover over the pot, oversized chopsticks in hand, until the timer dinged its plaintive note.

Spaghetti strands are a crafty bunch, and I couldn't let them out of my sight. If I were to turn my back, they might well slip over the edge of the pot and vanish into the night. The night lay in silent ambush, hoping to waylay the prodigal strands.

Spaghetti alla parmigiana
Spaghetti alla napoletana
Spaghetti al cartoccio
Spaghetti aglio e olio
Spaghetti alla carbonara
Spaghetti della pina

And then there was the pitiful, nameless leftover spaghetti carelessly tossed into the fridge.

Born in heat, the strands of spaghetti washed down the river of 1971 and vanished.

I mourn them all—all the spaghetti of the year 1971.

When the phone rang at 3:20 P.M. I was sprawled out on the tatami, staring at the ceiling. A pool of winter sunlight had formed in the place where I lay. Like a dead fly I lay there, vacant, in a December spotlight.

At first, I didn't recognize the sound as the phone ringing. It was more like an unfamiliar memory that had hesitantly slipped in between the layers of air. Finally, though, it began to take shape, and, in the end, a ringing phone was unmistakably what it was. It was one hundred per cent a phone ring in one-hundred-per-cent real air. Still sprawled out, I reached over and picked up the receiver.

On the other end was a girl, a girl so indistinct that, by four-thirty, she might very well have disappeared altogether. She was the ex-girlfriend of a friend of mine. Something had brought them together, this guy and this indistinct girl, and something had led them to break up. I had, I admit, reluctantly played a role in getting them together in the first place.

"Sorry to bother you," she said, "but do you know where he is now?"

I looked at the phone, running my eyes along the length of the cord. The cord was, sure enough, attached to the phone. I managed a vague reply. There was something ominous in the girl's voice, and whatever trouble was brewing I knew that I didn't want to get involved.

"Nobody will tell me where he is," she said in a chilly tone. "Everybody's pretending they don't know. But there's something important I have to tell him, so *please*—tell me where he is. I promise I won't drag you into this. Where is he?"

"I honestly don't know," I told her. "I haven't seen him in a long time." My voice didn't sound like my own. I was telling the truth about not having seen him for a long time, but not about the other part—I did know his address and phone number. Whenever I tell a lie, something weird happens to my voice.

No comment from her.

The phone was like a pillar of ice.

Then all the objects around me turned into pillars of ice, as if I were in a J. G. Ballard science-fiction story.

"I really don't know," I repeated. "He went away a long time ago, without saying a word."

The girl laughed. "Give me a break. He's not that clever. We're talking about a guy who has to make a lot of noise no matter what he does."

She was right. The guy really was a bit of a dim bulb.

But I wasn't about to tell her where he was. Do that, and next I'd have *him* on the phone, giving me an earful. I was through with getting caught up in other people's messes. I'd already dug a hole in the back yard and buried everything that needed to be buried in it. Nobody could ever dig it up again.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"You don't like me, do you?" she said suddenly.

I had no idea what to say. I didn't particularly dislike her. I had no real impression of her at all. It's hard to have a bad impression of somebody you have no impression of.

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"I'm sorry," I said again. "But I'm cooking spaghetti right now."

"I'm sorry?"

"I said I'm cooking spaghetti," I lied. I had no idea why I said that. But the lie had already become a part of me—so much so that, at that moment at least, it didn't feel like a lie at all.

I went ahead and filled an imaginary pot with imaginary water, lit an imaginary stove with an imaginary match.

"So?" she asked.

I sprinkled imaginary salt into the boiling water, gently lowered a handful of imaginary spaghetti into the imaginary pot, set the imaginary kitchen timer for eight minutes.

"So I can't talk. The spaghetti will be ruined."

She didn't say anything.

"I'm really sorry, but cooking spaghetti is a delicate operation."

The girl was silent. The phone in my hand began to freeze again.

"So could you call me back?" I added hurriedly.

"Because you're in the middle of making spaghetti?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Are you making it for someone, or are you going to eat alone?"

"I'll eat it by myself," I said.

She held her breath for a long time, then slowly breathed out. "There's no way you could know this, but I'm really in trouble. I don't know what to do."

"I'm sorry I can't help you," I said.

"There's some money involved, too."

"I see."

"He owes me money," she said. "I lent him some money. I shouldn't have, but I had to."

I was quiet for a minute, my thoughts drifting toward spaghetti. "I'm sorry," I said. "But I've got the spaghetti going, so . . ."

She gave a listless laugh. "Goodbye," she said. "Say hi to your spaghetti for me. I hope it turns out O.K."

"Bye," I said.

When I hung up the phone, the circle of light on the floor had shifted an inch or two. I lay down again in that pool of light and resumed staring at the ceiling.

Thinking about spaghetti that boils eternally but is never done is a sad, sad thing.

Now I regret, a little, that I didn't tell the girl anything. Perhaps I should have. I mean, her ex-boyfriend wasn't much to start with—an empty shell of a guy with artistic pretensions, a great talker whom nobody trusted. She sounded as if she really were strapped for money, and, no matter what the situation, you've got to pay back what you borrow.

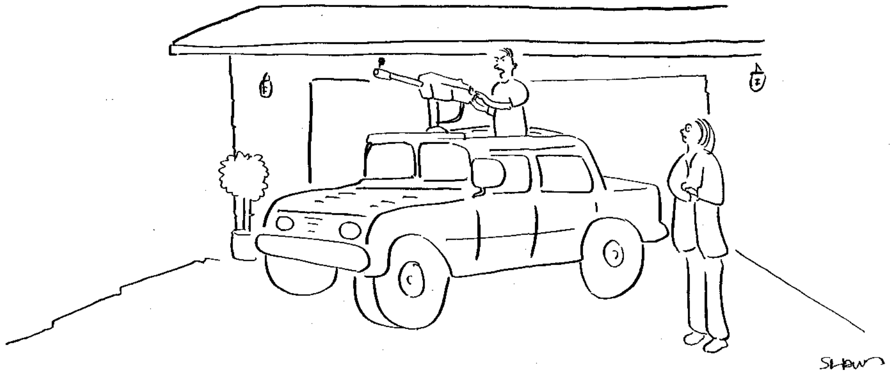
Sometimes I wonder what happened to the girl—the thought usually pops into my mind when I'm facing a steaming-hot plate of spaghetti. After she hung up the phone, did she disappear forever, sucked into the 4:30 P.M. shadows? Was I partly to blame?

I want you to understand my position, though. At the time, I didn't want to get involved with anyone. That's why I kept on cooking spaghetti, all by myself. In that huge pot, big enough to hold a German shepherd.

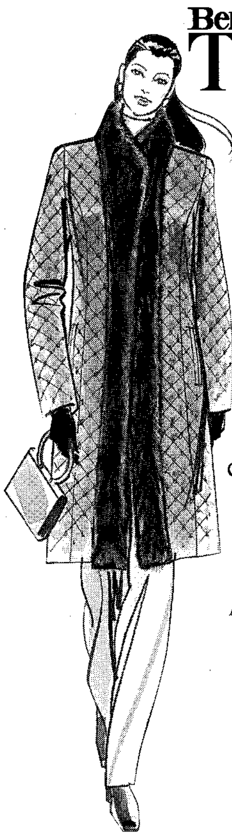
Durum semolina, golden wheat wafting in Italian fields.

Can you imagine how astonished the Italians would be if they knew that what they were exporting in 1971 was really *loneliness*? ♦

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Philip Gabriel.*)



"It helps prevent side collisions."



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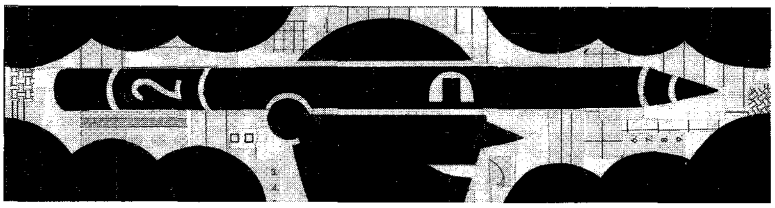


A CRITIC AT LARGE

PRISONER OF NARNIA

How C. S. Lewis escaped.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

The British literary scholar, Christian apologist, and children's-book author C. S. Lewis is one of two figures—Churchill is the other—whose reputation in Britain is so different from their reputation in America that we might as well be talking about two (or is that four?) different men. A god to the right in America, Churchill is admired in England but hardly beatified—more often thought of as a willful man of sporadic accomplishment who was at last called upon to do the one thing in life that he was capable of doing supremely well. In America, Lewis is a figure who has been incised on stained glass—truly: there's a stained-glass window with Lewis in it in a church in Monrovia, California—and remains, for the more intellectual and literate reaches of conservative religiosity, a saint revered and revealed, particularly in such books as "The Problem of Pain" and "The Screwtape Letters." In England, he is commonly regarded as a slightly embarrassing polemicist, who made joke-vicar broadcasts on the BBC, but who also happened to write a few very good books about late-medieval poetry and inspire several good students. (A former Archbishop of Canterbury, no less, "couldn't stand" Lewis, because of his bullying brand of religiosity, though John Paul II was said to be an admirer.)

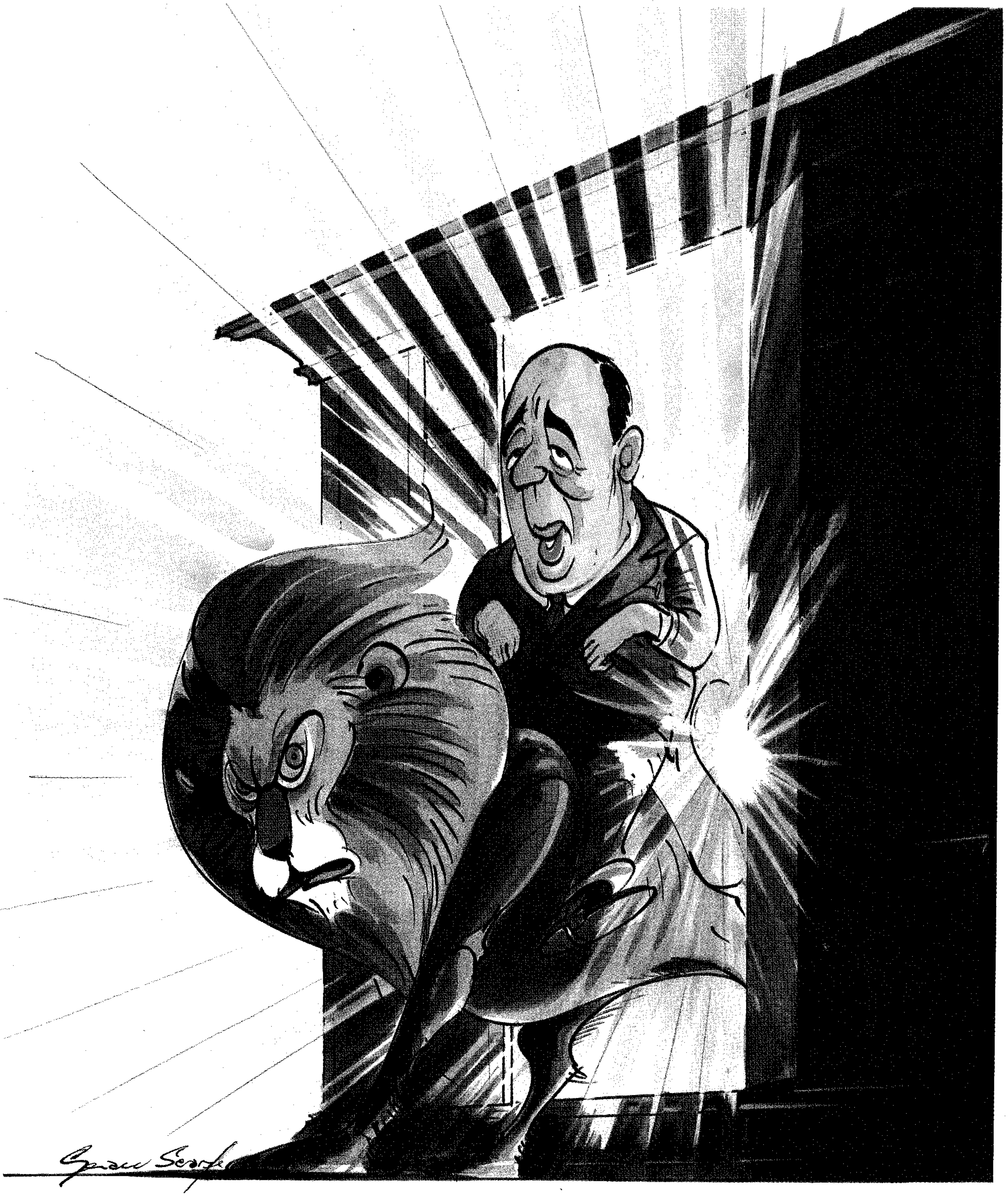
The British, of course, are capable of being embarrassed by anybody, and that they are embarrassed by Lewis does not prove that he is embarrassing. But the double vision of the man creates something of a transatlantic misunderstanding. If in England he is subject to condescension, his admirers here have made him hostage to a cult. "The Narnian" (HarperSanFrancisco; $25.95), a new life of Lewis by his disciple Alan Jacobs, is an instance of that sectarian enthusiasm. Lewis is defended, analyzed, protected, but always in the end vindicated, while his detractors are mocked at length: a kind of admiration not so different in its effects from derision. Praise a good writer too single-mindedly for too obviously ideological reasons for too long, and pretty soon you have him all to yourself. The same thing has happened to G. K. Chesterton: the enthusiasts are so busy chortling and snickering as their man throws another right hook at the rationalist that they don't notice that the rationalist isn't actually down on the canvas; he and his friends have long since left the building.

In England, the more representative biography of Lewis is the acidic though generally admiring life that A. N. Wilson published some fifteen years ago. It gives Lewis his due without forcing stained-glass spectacles on the reader. (Wilson is quite clear, for instance, about Lewis's weird and complicated sex life.) While William Nicholson's "Shadowlands," in all its play, movie, and television versions, shows the priggish Lewis finally humanized by sex with an American Jewish matron, it actually reflects the British, rather than the American, view: Lewis as a prig to be saved from priggishness, rather than as a saint who saved others from their sins.

None of this would matter much if it weren't for Narnia. The seven tales of the English children who cross over, through a wardrobe, into a land where animals speak and lions rule, which Lewis began in the late nineteen-forties, are classics in the only sense that matters—books that are read a full generation after their author is gone. They have become, to be sure, highly controversial classics: the wonderful British fantasist Philip Pullman has excoriated their racism (the ogres are dark-skinned and almond-eyed), their nasty little-Englandness, and their narrow-hearted religiosity. But they are part of the common imagination of childhood, and, with the release of "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" as the first of a series of film adaptations, they are likely—if the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy is any indication—to become still more deeply implanted.

The two Lewises—the British bleeding don and the complacent American saint—do a kind of battle in the imagination of those who care as much about Narnia as they do about its author. Is Narnia a place of Christian faith or a place to get away from it? As one reads the enormous literature on Lewis's life and thought—there are at least five biographies, and now a complete, three-volume set of his letters—the picture that emerges is of a very odd kind of fantasist and a very odd kind of Christian. The hidden truth that his faith was really of a fable-first kind kept his writing forever in tension between his desire to imagine and his responsibility to dogmatize. His works are a record of a restless, intelligent man, pacing a cell of his own invention and staring through the barred windows at the stars beyond. That the door was open all the time, and that he held the key in his pocket, was something he discovered only at the end.

The early, appealing part of Lewis's life is extremely well told in his own 1955 memoir, "Surprised by Joy." He was born in 1898, into a rough and ready but pious Ulster Protestant family in Belfast; his father was dense and eccentric—a man with "more power of confusing an issue or taking up a fact wrongly than any man I have ever met," his exasperated son wrote much later—and his mother, who died before Lewis turned ten, was warm and loving and simple. The key relation

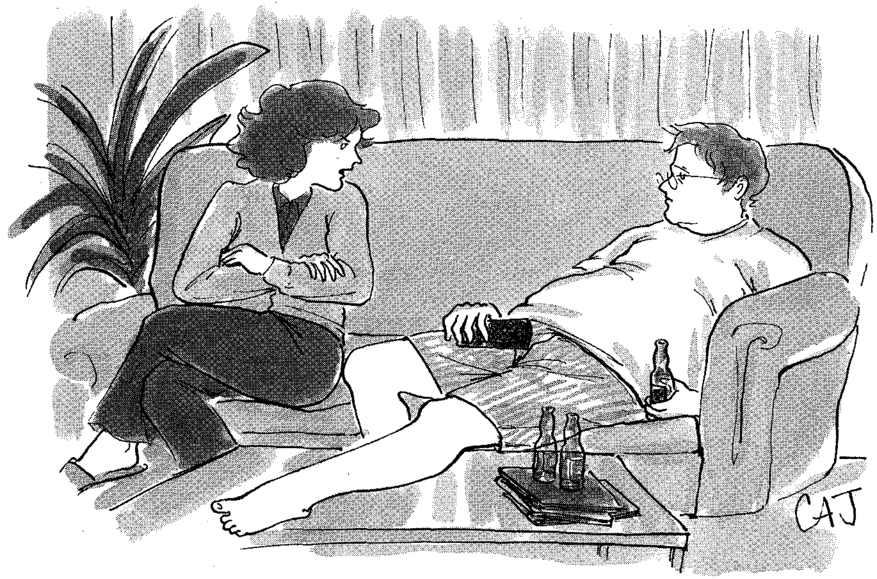


As a child, Lewis was overcome by an experience he called "Joy"; as an adult he created a kingdom that would contain it.

GERALD SCARFE

in his life was with his older brother, Warnie, with whom he shared a taste for reading and even a private language and mythology, and to whom he remained close throughout Warnie's long, unhappy, and, later, alcoholic life.

Above all, the young Lewis, often in company with his brother, read and walked. He was the sort of kid who is moved to tears every day by poems and trees. He loved landscape and twilight, myth and fairy tale, particularly the Irish landscape near their suburban home, and the stories of George MacDonald. Now too easily overlooked in the history of fantasy, MacDonald's stories ("At the Back of the North Wind," "The Princess and the Goblin," and, most of all, "Phantastes") evoked in Lewis an emotion bigger than mere pleasure—a kind of shining sense of goodness and romance and light. Lewis called this emotion, simply, the "Joy." With it came the feeling that both the world and the words were trying to tell him something—not just that there is something good out there but that there is something *big* out there. The young Lewis found this magic in things as different as Beatrix Potter and Longfellow, "Paradise Lost" and Norse



"Sometimes I think you only married me because I lived next door!"

• •

myth. "They taught me longing," he said, and made him a "votary of the Blue Flower," after a story by the German poet Novalis, in which a youth dreams of a blue flower and spends his life searching for it. The Christianity he knew in childhood, by contrast, seemed the opposite of magic and joy: dull sermons and dry moral equations to be solved.

This loving and mother-deprived boy was sent to a series of nightmarish English boarding schools, where he was beaten and bullied and traumatized beyond even the normal expectations of English adolescence. Lewis's own words about the places are practically Leninist. (One headmaster raced down the length of a room with his cane to beat a lower-middle-class boy, enraged by his social pretensions.) Lewis writes about his last school, Malvern, at such length, and with such horror—with far more intensity than he writes even about serving on the Western Front—that it's clear that the trauma, coming at a time of sexual awakening, was deep and lasting. It seems to have had the usual result: Lewis developed and craved what even his Christian biographer, Jacobs, calls "mildly sadomasochistic fantasies"; in letters to a (homosexual) friend, he named the women he'd like to spank, and for a time signed his private letters "Philomastix"—"whip-lover."

A bright and sensitive British boy turned by public-school sadism into a warped, morbid, stammering sexual pervert. It sounds like the usual story. What was special about Lewis was that, throughout it all, he kept an inner life. Joy kept him alive—and it is possible that the absence of happiness allowed an access of joy. When he served on the Western Front, in 1917, he got what every soldier wanted—an honest wound honestly come by but bad enough to send him home. Still, he saw the trenches as they really were, and though he chose largely to forget, and tried to deprecate the importance of "the horribly smashed men still moving like half-crushed beetles," he admitted, in later years, that he had had nightmares about it for the rest of his life.

Oxford always seemed like joy to escapees from public schools; add the Western Front, and it must have seemed like something close to paradise. After Lewis's first long residence there, upon his departure from the Army, in 1918, he never left Oxford again, except, at the end, for Cambridge. He took a first in classics, and then made a decision, slightly daring in those days, when teaching English literature seemed as swinging as teaching media studies does now, to become a tutor in English; he soon became a fellow in English at Magdalen College. (He also took up with a much older married woman, with whom he had a long affair that may have had a sadomasochistic tinge.)

Jacobs is a bit touristy about Magdalen's charms; Wilson is much better, tartly and accurately describing how the system of tutorials, seemingly so seductive—an essay delivered each week by the pupil, and analyzed and critiqued by the tutor—helps turn the tutors, from sheer exhaustion and self-protection, into caricatures of themselves, rather as the girls in a lap-dance club take on exotic names and characters. Lewis, the sensitive and soft-spoken young hiker, took on the part of a bluff, hearty Irishman, all tweed and pipe. It is this Lewis who became an Oxford legend, smoking in darkened rooms and holding "Beer and Beowulf" evenings in his rooms. He held to the narrow anti-modern curriculum then in place at Oxford, and befriended a young philologist named J. R. R. Tolkien, whose views on teaching English were even more severe than Lewis's: Tolkien thought that literature ended at 1100.

Lewis had a reputation as a tough but inspiring teacher, and, reading his letters, one can see why. His literary judgments are full of discovery; his allegiance to a dry, historical approach in the university didn't keep him from having bracingly clear critical opinions about modern books, all of them independent and most of them right. He got the greatness of Wodehouse long before it was fashionable to do so, appreciated Trollope over Thackeray, and could admire even writers as seemingly unsympathetic to him as Woolf and Kafka. He was a partisan without being a bigot.

It was through the intervention of the secretive and personally troubled Tolkien, however, that Lewis finally made the turn toward orthodox Christianity. In company with another friend, they took a long, and now famous, walk, on an autumn night in 1931, pacing and arguing from early evening to early morning. Tolkien was a genuinely eccentric character—in college, the inventor of Lothlorien played the part of the humorless pedant—who had been ready to convert Lewis for several years. Lewis was certainly ripe to be converted. The liberal humanism in which he had been raised as a thinker had come to seem far too narrowly Philistine and materialist to account for the intimations of transcendence that came to him on country walks and in pages of poetry. Tolkien, seizing on this vulnerability, said that the obvious-seeming distinction that Lewis made between myth and fact—between intimations of timeless joy and be-

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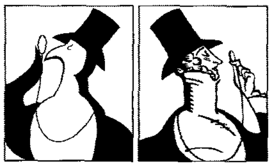

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world of their religion. Only since the Renaissance had writers had a third world, of the marvellous, of free mythological invention, which is serious but in which the author does not really believe or make an article of faith. In Ariosto, Lewis found the beginnings of that "free creation of the marvelous," slipping in under the guise of allegory:

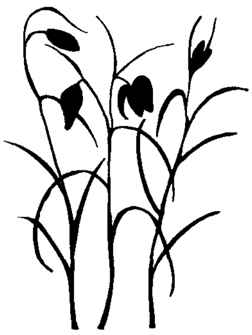
> The probable, the marvelous-taken-as-fact, the marvelous-known-to-fiction—such is the triple equipment of the post-Renaissance poet. Such were the three worlds which Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton were born to. . . . But this triple heritage is a late conquest. Go back to the beginnings of any literature and you will not find it. At the beginning the only marvels are the marvels which are taken for fact. . . . The old gods, when they ceased to be taken as gods, might so easily have been suppressed as devils. . . . Only their allegorical use, prepared by slow developments within paganism itself, saved them, as in a temporary tomb, for the day when they could wake again in the beauty of acknowledged myth and thus provide modern Europe with its "third world" of romantic imagining. . . . The gods must be, as it were, disinfected of belief; the last taint of the sacrifice, and of the urgent practical interest, the selfish prayer, must be washed away from them, before that other divinity can come to light in the imagination. For poetry to spread its wings fully, there must be, besides the believed religion, a marvelous that knows itself as myth.

When we sit down to write a romance, then, we make up elves and ghosts and wraiths and wizards, in whom we don't believe but in whom we enclose our most urgent feelings, and we demand that the world they inhabit be consistent and serious.

Yet, if these words are a declaration of faith, they are also a document of bad conscience. For, throughout his own imaginative writing, Lewis is always trying to stuff the marvellous back into the allegorical—his conscience as a writer lets him see that the marvellous should be there for its own marvellous sake, just as imaginative myth, but his Christian duty insists that the marvellous must (to use his own giveaway language) be reinfected with belief. He is always trying to inoculate metaphor with allegory, or, at least, drug it, so that it walks around hollow-eyed, saying just what it's supposed to say.

Marvellous writing in our culture has two homes, children's literature and science fiction, and in his forties Lewis began to work in both. His first effort, the trilogy that begins with "Out of the Silent Planet," is essentially science fiction written against science. What is really out there is not more machines but bigger mysteries. But these books are lacking in vitality, and seem worked out rather than lived in. They are filled with a kind of easy Blimpish polemics—the bad scientists are fat and smelly, or atheists. It was only in the late forties, when he began to write, quickly and almost carelessly, about the magic world of Narnia, that he began to find a deeper vein of feeling.

What is so moving about the Narnia stories is that, though Lewis began with a number of haunted images—a street lamp in the snow, the magic wardrobe itself, the gentle intelligent faun who meets Lucy—he never wrote down to, or even for, children, except to use them as characters, and to make his sentences one shade simpler than usual. He never tries to engineer an entertainment for kids. He writes, instead, as real writers must, a real book for a circle of readers large and small, and the result is a fairy tale that includes, encyclopedically, everything he feels most passionate about: the nature of redemption, the problem of pain, the Passion and the Resurrection, all set in his favored mystical English winter-and-spring landscape. Had he tried for less, the books would not have lasted so long. The trouble was that though he could encompass his obsessions, he could not entirely surrender to his imagination. The emotional power of the book, as every sensitive child has known, diminishes as the religious part intensifies. The most explicitly religious part of his myth is the most strenuously, and the least successfully, allegorized. Aslan the lion, the Christ symbol, who has exasperated generations of freethinking parents and delighted generations of worried Anglicans, is, after all, a very weird symbol for that famous carpenter's son—not just an un-Christian but in many ways an anti-Christian figure.



When "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" (magical title!) opens, four children who have been sent to the countryside discover an enchanted land on the other side of an old wardrobe; this is Narnia, and it has been enslaved by a White Witch, who has turned the country to eternal winter. The talking animals who live in Narnia wait desperately for the return of Aslan, the lion-king, who might restore their freedom. At last, Aslan returns. Beautiful and brave and instantly attractive, he has a deep voice and a commanding presence, obviously kingly. The White Witch conspires to have him killed, and succeeds, in part because of the children's errors. Miraculously, he returns to life, liberates Narnia, and returns the land to spring.

Yet a central point of the Gospel story is that Jesus is not the lion of the faith but the lamb of God, while his other symbolic animal is, specifically, the lowly and bedraggled donkey. The moral force of the Christian story is that the lions are all on the other side. If we had, say, a donkey, a seemingly uninspiring animal from an obscure corner of Narnia, raised as an uncouth and low-caste beast of burden, rallying the mice and rats and weasels and vultures and all the other unclean animals, and then being killed by the lions in as humiliating a manner as possible—a donkey who reëmerges, to the shock even of his disciples and devotees, as the king of all creation—now, *that* would be a Christian allegory. A powerful lion, starting life at the top of the food chain, adored by all his subjects and filled with temporal power, killed by a despised evil witch for his power and then reborn to rule, is a Mithraic, not a Christian, myth.

Tolkien hated the Narnia books, despite Lewis's avid sponsorship of Tolkien's own mythology, because he hated to see an imagination constrained by the allegorical impulse. Though Tolkien was certainly a devout Catholic, there is no way in which "The Lord of the Rings" is a Christian book, much less a Catholic allegory. The Blessed Land across the sea is a retreat for the already immortal, not, except for Frodo, a reward for the afflicted; dead is dead. The pathos of Aragorn and Arwen's marriage is that, after Aragorn's death, they will never meet again, in Valinor or elsewhere. It is the modernity of the existential arrangement, in tension with the archaicism of the material culture, that makes Tolkien's myth haunting. In the final Narnia book, "The Last Battle," the effort to key the fantasy to the Biblical themes of the Apocalypse is genuinely creepy, with an Aslan Antichrist. The best of the books are the ones, like "The Horse and His Boy," where the allegory is at a minimum and the images just flow.

A startling thing in Lewis's letters to other believers is how much energy and practical advice is dispensed about how to keep your belief going: they are constantly writing to each other about the state of their beliefs, as chronic sinus sufferers might write to each other about the state of their noses. Keep your belief going, no matter what it takes—the thought not occurring that a belief that needs this much work to believe in isn't really a belief but a very strong desire to believe. In his extended essay "The Problem of Pain," which appeared, propitiously, in 1940, and in his novel "The Screwtape Letters," two years later—these are written to a younger devil by an older one—Lewis takes as his presumed opponent a naïve materialist who believes in progress and in the realm of common sense and the factual and verifiable, and who relegates imagination and myth and ritual to a doomy past. Lewis has an easy time showing that progress is dubious, that evil persists, that imagination has a crucial role to play in life, that life without a shared ritual and some kind of sacred myth is hardly worth living. But, trying to explain why God makes good people suffer, Lewis can answer only that God doesn't, bad people do, and God gave bad people free will to be bad because a world in which people could only be good would be a world peopled by robots. Anyway, God never gives people pain that isn't good for them in the long run. This kind of apologetic is better at explaining colic than cancer, let alone concentration camps.

An old Oxford tradition claims that Bertrand Russell, on being asked why his concerns had turned so dramatically away from academic philosophy, replied, with great dignity, "Because I discovered fucking." So did Lewis, only he was older. The story of how Lewis came to be seduced by a married woman named—for fate is a cornier screenwriter than even man is—Joy is so well told in the "Shadowlands" film that one is almost inclined to imagine it overdrawn. But, indeed, the real Joy Davidman, a spirited Jewish matron from Westchester who had been impressed by Lewis's books, was not delicate and transcendent but foulmouthed, passionate, a little embarrassing. She drove away his more bearishly single-minded Oxford friends, including Tolkien. Fierce and independent-minded (she was played by Debra Winger in the movie but seems more Barbra Streisand in life), Davidman was a Christian convert who never lost her native oomph. After she Yokoishly insinuated herself into Lewis's life, in the early fifties, she also brought him passion. They "feasted on love," Lewis wrote. "No cranny of heart or body remained unsatisfied." That's a lot of crannies for a middle-aged don to be satisfying, but it had a happy effect on his mind and on his prose.

It is tempting to say that Lewis, in the dramatic retellings of this story, becomes hostage to another kind of cult, the American cult of salvation through love and sex and the warmth of parenting. (She had two kids for him to help take care of.) Yet this is exactly what seems to have happened. Lewis, to the dismay of his friends, went from being a private prig and common-room hearty to being a mensch—a C. of E. mensch, but a mensch. When Joy died, of bone cancer, a few years later, he was abject with sadness, and it produced "A Grief Portrayed," one of the finest books written about mourning. Lewis, without abandoning his God, begins to treat him as something other than a dispenser of vacuous bromides. "Can a mortal ask questions which God finds unanswerable? Quite easily, I should think," he wrote, and his faith becomes less joblike and more Job-like: questioning, unsure—a dangerous quest rather than a querulous dogma. Lewis ended up in a state of uncertain personal faith that seems to the unbeliever comfortingly like doubt.

"Everything began with images," Lewis wrote, admitting that he saw his faun before he got his message. He came to Bethlehem by way of Narnia, not the other way around. Whatever we think of the allegories it contains, the imaginary world that Lewis created is what matters. We go to the writing of the marvellous, and to children's books, for stories, certainly, and for the epic possibilities of good and evil in confrontation, not yet so mixed as they are in life. But we go, above all, for imagery: it is the force of imagery that carries us forward. We have a longing for inexplicable sublime imagery, and particularly for inexplicable sublime imagery that involves the collision of the urban and the natural, the city and the sea. The image of the street lamp in the snow in "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe"; the flock of crying white birds and the sleeping Narnian lords at the world's end in "Voyage of the Dawn Treader"; the underground abode of the surviving Narnian animals in "Prince Caspian," part "Wind in the Willows" badger hole and part French Resistance cellar; even the exiled horse's description of his lost Northern home in "The Horse and His Boy," called Narnia but so clearly a British composite ("Narnia of the heathery mountains and the thymy downs, Narnia of the many rivers, of the plashing glens, the mossy caverns and the deep forests")—these are why Lewis will be remembered.

For poetry and fantasy aren't stimulants to a deeper spiritual appetite; they are what we have to fill the appetite. The experience of magic conveyed by poetry, landscape, light, and ritual, is . . . an experience of magic conveyed by poetry, landscape, light, and ritual. To hope that the conveyance will turn out to bring another message, beyond itself, is the futile hope of the mystic. Fairy stories are not rich because they are true, and they lose none of their light because someone lit the candle. It is here that the atheist and the believer meet, exactly in the realm of made-up magic. Atheists need ghosts and kings and magical uncles and strange coincidences, living fairies and thriving Lilliputians, just as much as the believers do, to register their understanding that a narrow material world, unlit by imagination, is inadequate to our experience, much less to our hopes.

The religious believer finds consolation, and relief, too, in the world of magic exactly because it is at odds with the necessarily straitened and punitive morality of organized worship, even if the believer is, like Lewis, reluctant to admit it. The irrational images—the street lamp in the snow and the silver chair and the speaking horse—are as much an escape for the Christian imagination as for the rationalist, and we sense a deeper joy in Lewis's prose as it escapes from the demands of Christian belief into the darker realm of magic. As for faith, well, a handful of images is as good as an armful of arguments, as the old apostles always knew. ♦

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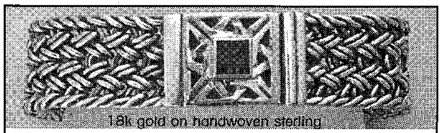
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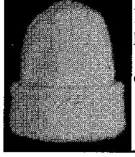
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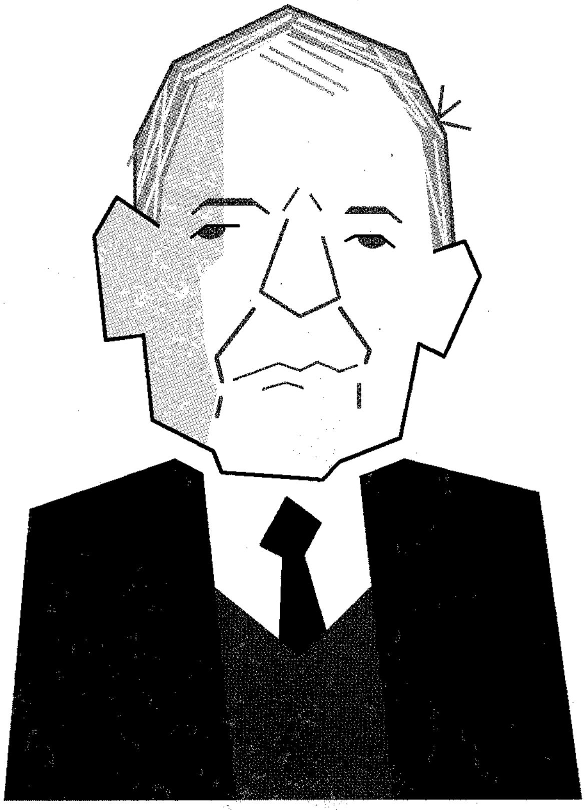
BOOKS

FLASHY TO THE RESCUE

George MacDonald Fraser's latest Flashman novel.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

"Flashman on the March" (Knopf; $24), George MacDonald Fraser's twelfth book about the Victorian rogue and soldier Flashman, finds both the author and the hero in dauntless fettle, the former as keen to invent perils and seducible women as the latter is, respectively, to survive and to seduce them. Fraser, an Englishman schooled in Scotland, served with the Highland Regiment in India, Africa, and the Middle East, before settling on the Isle of Man. He has written other fiction, plus history, autobiography, and film scripts, besides serving as Flashman's assiduous editor; the series is presented, under the over-all title "The Flashman Papers," as its protagonist's memoirs, which need only a few footnotes and spelling corrections to become excellent entertainments. It was a brilliant stroke of Fraser's, in the first volume, "Flashman" (1969), to retrieve a minor figure in Thomas Hughes's greatly popular, intensely Christian best-seller "Tom Brown's School Days" (1857) and reanimate him as a lauded though inadvertent hero in the service of the British Empire. Hughes introduces Flashman simply as "Flashman the School-house bully," who likes to organize tossing the smaller boys at Rugby School in a blanket: "What your real bully likes in tossing, is when the boys kick and struggle, or hold on to one side of the blanket, and so get pitched bodily on to the floor; it's no fun to him when no one is hurt or frightened." Hughes is at pains to explain that "bullies are cowards, and one coward makes many," but, beyond that, he is so little interested in Flashman that he dismisses him in a paragraph, halfway through the book, for getting "beastly drunk" on gin punch amply overlaid by beer. The famed pious headmaster, Thomas Arnold, "who had long had his eye on Flashman, arranged for his withdrawal next morning."



In the new book, Fraser sends his hero to Abyssinia.

STEPHEN SAVAGE

Thus rusticated, Flashman languished for more than a century until he was reborn as Fraser's cavalryman. In "Flashman," the former Rugby bully confesses his expulsion to his father and persuades this guardian, and his dead mother's brother, Uncle Bindley, to arrange and pay for his enlistment in the Eleventh Light Dragoons, Prince Albert's Hussars. The regiment has recently returned from India and is not apt, Flashman calculates, to be posted abroad again soon. But, under the war-loving, blockheaded Lord Cardigan, it swiftly resumes its quest for military glory, in the India and Afghanistan of 1839-42, taking Flashman with it. The great joke of his initial outing is that, though behaving with consistent selfishness and poltroonery, he not only emerges unscathed but is awarded a medal, with sentimental effusions, by the Queen. He is the antihero of Empire, the negative of the imperial virtues, printed as a positive in the muddle of battle. The irony weakens, though, in the course of the eleven sequels. To survive and triumph as he invariably does, Flashman must manifest at least two admirable traits: an almost supernatural gift for languages that carries him through many a covert operation, and a winning way with women that does much the same thing. Women get him out of as much trouble as they get him into, and the reader gathers an impression of a personal attractiveness and coolheadedness of which scarcely a hint existed in the craven bully of the relentlessly cautionary "Tom Brown's School Days." Hughes's text allowed him only to be "big and strong" and to have "a bluff offhand manner, which passed for heartiness, and considerable powers of being pleasant when he liked." The early Flashman of "Flashman" is thoroughly vicious, hitting out at women and hiding behind the battlefield heroics of braver men, and Fraser's tone is mordantly satiric, at the expense of the Victorian upper classes. As the series proceeds, however, its antihero becomes a hero in spite of his own professions to the contrary.

Additionally to our hero's credit belongs the historical and ethnographic interest of the cumulative "Flashman Papers"; he is a keen observer and appreciator of the Empire's adversaries even as they strive to slay him. Of all his guises, none is more appealing than the ninety-year-old retiree who in the latest of his published papers ruminates:

> You can always tell when something is coming to an end. You know, by the way events are shaping, that it can't last much longer, but you think there are still a few days or weeks to go . . . and that's the moment when it finishes with a sudden bang that you didn't expect. Come to think of it, that's probably true of life, or so it strikes me at the age of ninety—but I don't expect it to happen before tea. Yet one of these days the muf-

fins will grow cold and the tea-cakes congeal as they summon the lads from belowstairs to cart the old cadaver up to the best bedroom. And if I've a moment before the light fades, I'll be able to cry, "Sold, Starnberg and Ignatieff and Iron Eyes and Gul Shah and Charity Spring and all the rest of you bastards who tried to do for old Flashy, 'cos he's going out on his own, and be damned to you!"

It may be Fraser himself, born in 1926, who is feeling valedictory. The Flashman of "Flashman on the March," describing his intricate sub-rosa role in General Robert Napier's Abyssinian campaign of 1867-68, slips into nostalgic remembrance often enough to render an inventory of his previous adventures. In recalling how he (uniquely) survived a plunge down the Blue Nile's Tisisat Falls, he evokes other near-drownings:

> I've known what it is to drown, on several occasions, most memorably in the Skrang river with a blowpipe dart in my ribs, and upside down in that infernal drain beneath Jotunberg Castle, and at the bottom of a bath in the amorous clutches of the demented Queen of Madagascar, but only in the maelstrom under the Blue Nile falls was I unable even to struggle feebly as I drifted upwards through that silvery radiance, the agony of suffocation gradually changing to a dreamy languor.

An encounter with the earthy Queen of Wollo Galla revives memories of the Empress of China, the Maharani of the Punjab, the Rani of Jhansi, and Queen Victoria ("our own gracious monarch") herself. Twirling a revolver takes him back to the American Southwest; being tossed onto a roaring fire reminds him of how "during my service in the Punjab I had the misfortune to be basted on a gridiron"; being placed in chains evokes being caged in Russia, "and the Gwalior bottle dungeon, and China when the Imps collared me before Pekin." An atrocity perpetrated by Abyssinia's Emperor Theodore fetches to his mind's eye the "mass scalpings and blowing from guns and the knouting of a Russian peasant" that he witnessed in his adventure-laden years. Though Flashman has the resilience of a comic-book hero, his testimonies to nineteenth-century barbarities are not comic. Fraser's carefully documented slaughters weight these cheerful potboilers with history's grim ballast—at the risk, it might be said, of jaggedly dividing the reader's attention as he flips back and forth to the copious endnotes, a total of sixty-two in this novel, making nearly twenty distractingly informative extra pages.

Flashman's breezy language and assumptions reveal a good deal of the Empire's inner life. To its servants, at least on Flashman's level, it was a way out of foggy England, and a welcome sexual holiday. "One of the things that has always enchanted me about African women with an appetite," he confides, "is that they don't waste time before indulging it. Where their European sisters have to be jollied into the supine position . . . ladies of colour tend to make straight for the mutton." Illustrations follow:

> A tall figure advanced silently into the shaft of moonlight from the high narrow window—a figure in a robe of saffron silk which slid to the floor without a sound, revealing a splendid golden body swaying slowly towards me, slim hands clasped over her breasts and then falling away to caress her hips as she passed from the moonbeam into the shadow.

In case we don't get the picture, Flashman explains, "It was being borne in on me that the moral climate of Abyssinia was not quite that of our own polite society." He becomes almost a bore on the topic:

> In Ab society, which as I've told you is probably the most immoral on earth (Cheltenham ain't in it), rogering the hostess is almost obligatory, part of the etiquette, like leaving cards, and not at all out of the way in a country where it's considered a mortal insult to praise a woman's chastity, since it implies that she's not attractive enough to be galloped.

Boringness on the subject threatens his creator, too; to keep his pot boiling, Fraser keeps tossing fresh female bodies into it. No sooner is Malee, with her abovementioned splendid golden body and "long lovely Egyptian face and huge eyes," chalked up than the formidable Uliba-Wark, her "proud Ethiopian head with its laughing eyes" and "voluptuous lower lip," her "lovely oiled limbs shining in the firelight," is wheeled into position, in turn to be supplanted by her plump but lusty half sister Masteeat and the bare-breasted warrior Miriam, a "little satin stunner" with "blue eyes, bigod," for a change. She is later referred to as "a bonny bint"; Fraser eruditely sprinkles the narrative with Victorian slang omitted from most assigned texts. Flashman remembers Uliba-Wark to have been "as splendid a piece of bounce

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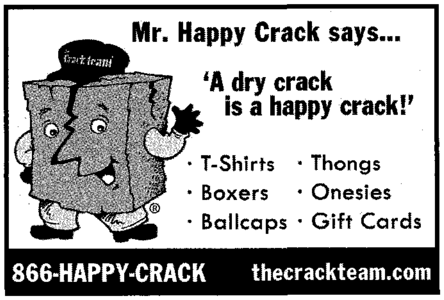

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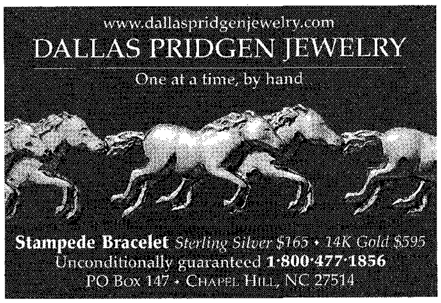

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as I'd seen," advises the reader to "never miss the chance of a rattle," and apologizes for his failure to observe all the details of an Abyssinian feast served by young women wearing brass collars and tiny aprons: "You don't, when your *maise* is being poured by a lovely little Hebe who rests her bare poont on your shoulder as she stoops to your cup." The unspeakable "n" word is liberally bestowed upon anyone with a skin darker than English custard, though anthropological distinctions are not ignored: "I studied the escorts, and a formidable pair they were, tall, splendidly built, black as night but not negroid with their long heads and chins and straight noses."

What light does the old, politically incorrect Empire shed, as Britain celebrates the bicentennial of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar, on America's present efforts to bring order and democracy to the benighted? In an introductory "Explanatory Note," the author speaks in his own voice of the Abyssinian War of 1868:

> [It was] surely the strangest of all imperial campaigns, when a British Indian army invaded one of the least known and most dangerous countries on earth, and in the face of apparently insuperable hazards, and predictions of certain failure, marched and fought their way across a trackless wilderness of rocky chasm and jagged mountain to their goal, did what they had come to do, and marched out again with hardly a casualty. There has never perhaps been a success like it in the history of war. It took twelve thousand men, a mighty fleet, nine million pounds (a staggering sum at that time), a meticulous if extravagant organization, and a remarkable old soldier—and all to rescue a tiny group of British citizens held captive by a mad monster of an African king. Those were, to quote Flashman, the days.

Fraser returns in his endnotes to worry at the issues: "Should Britain have stayed, and pacified the country, assuming the white man's burden? There are those who think so. . . . Of one thing we can be sure: if Britain had stayed, revisionist historians would certainly have condemned it as another act of selfish imperialism." In the relaxed aftermath of victory, General Napier applies to imperialism the old Scots adage "Ye canna dae right for daein' wrang!"

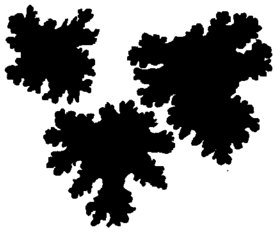
Advantageously, the Abyssinian campaign had a precisely defined objective, the rescue of the British prisoners, who included Her Majesty's envoy to the court of the Emperor Theodore, Captain Douglas Cameron. The indignant British public was for action, though it disliked the cost of "a penny or more on the income tax." The Empire was global, and it drew upon loyal Sikh and Indian armies for this African intervention. Western technology still had the edge: the Abyssinians, Flashman reports, were "shot flat, massacred if you like, by Messrs. Snider and Enfield, gallant savages decimated by modern weapons." In the siege of his stronghold of Magdala, Theodore (who admired the British and wanted his son to go to school in England) committed suicide, relieving the Crown of the embarrassment of what to do with him. Napier exercised a conqueror's prerogatives by burning down Magdala and giving the territory to the Galla queen Masteeat—a historical figure, unlike Flashman's slimmer bints. The British, though the Foreign Office helped precipitate the war by ignoring a letter from the Abyssinian monarch to the Queen proposing a friendlier relationship, made shrewd use, once embarked upon their face-saving invasion, of local politics; Flashman's secret mission is to persuade, with a bribe of fifty thousand Maria Theresa dollars, Masteeat to encircle Magdala with her army and prevent Theodore's escape. Know your ground, spend what's needed for thorough preparation, quit while you're ahead, and leave nation-building to the natives, at each other's throats though they be: these would seem to be the lessons, possibly but not necessarily applicable to our second invasion of Iraq. History repeats, but always with differences. Abyssinia had no oil reserves worth securing, and its Coptic-flavored brand of Christianity wasn't inspiring terrorists in London.

Flashman's own conclusion proposes "suggesting to Her Majesty's ministers that next time they get a letter from a touchy barbarian despot, it might save 'em a great deal of trouble and expense if they sent him a civil reply by return of post." But, if they had placated Emperor Theodore, George MacDonald Fraser would have had one less historical imbroglio to convert into a postmodern penny dreadful, which, along with its hero's hairbreadth escapes and blithe lechery, treats us to a piece of history that once made headlines as gripping and agitating as today's. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Joseph Smith, *by Richard Lyman Bushman (Knopf; $35).* Joseph Smith claimed that he was visited by an angel who gave him golden plates from which he transcribed the Book of Mormon, and he had organized a church before he was twenty-five. His personal charisma and his administrative genius helped spread Mormonism throughout the Western United States, turning the sect into a legislative federation complete with social and political institutions. There were always those who thought Smith a charlatan and a fanatic, and, in 1844, at the age of thirty-eight, he was fatally shot by an angry mob. Bushman is both an emeritus professor of history at Columbia and a practicing Mormon, and his exhaustive biography carefully treads a path between reverence and objectivity, as when he investigates the phenomenon of "plural marriage"; Smith, in order to establish "a Righteous race . . . upon the Earth," had more than thirty wives.

Warped Passages, *by Lisa Randall (Ecco; $27.95).* Randall, a professor of physics at Harvard, offers a tour of current questions in particle physics, string theory, and cosmology, paying particular attention to the thesis that more physical dimensions exist than are usually acknowledged. Writing for a general audience, Randall is patient and kind: she encourages readers to skip around in the text, corrals mathematical equations in an appendix at the back, and starts off each chapter with an allegorical story, in a manner recalling the work of George Gamow. Although the subject itself is intractably difficult to follow, the exuberance of Randall's narration is appealing. She's honest about the limits of the known, and almost revels in the uncertainties that underlie her work—including the possibility that some day it may all be proved wrong.



No Applause—Just Throw Money, *by Trav S.D. (Faber & Faber; $25).* Late in the nineteenth century, America's variety theatre—which was notorious for the brawling, drinking, thieving, gambling, stripping, whoring, and cursing that went with it—was supplanted by the comparatively clean-cut vaudeville. "Don't say 'slob' or 'son of a gun' or 'Holy Gee' on the stage unless you want to be canceled peremptorily," one manager's memo read. Trav S.D., himself a performer, describes with infectious relish such acts as a banjo-playing Shakespeare reciter, a one-legged tap dancer, a man who wrote backward, a comic lecturer on human anatomy, a drag trapeze artist, and "The Vagges—World Champion Bag Punchers." Vaudeville withstood critics from Hitler to Henry Ford, along with innumerable tough crowds (Yale students were reportedly among the worst), to become a big business with a lasting impact; Bob Hope, George Burns, Fred Astaire, Buster Keaton, and the Marx Brothers all got their start there.

The Ongoing Moment, *by Geoff Dyer (Pantheon; $28.50).* A self-styled "scholarly gatecrasher," Dyer has written with equal fervor about D. H. Lawrence, military history, and jazz. Here he turns to photography, with the caveat "I make no claim to being an expert in this or any other field." Indeed, he confesses, "I don't even *own* a camera." The resulting book is a curious encyclopedia, purposefully eclectic and incomplete. The images are taken mostly from the canon of American twentieth-century photography, but Dyer arranges them in unexpected clusters—blind accordionists here, vacant benches there. He imagines William Eggleston's pictures to be the work of a Martian, stranded in Middle America, who keeps looking for his lost ticket home, "with a haphazard thoroughness that confounds established methods of investigation." The Martian is an apt stand-in for Dyer, a flâneur in the world of photography, who bypasses the famous sights in favor of back alleys and side streets.

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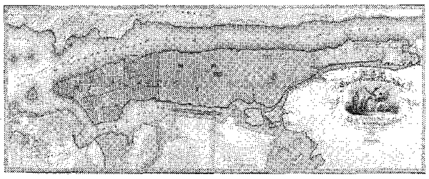

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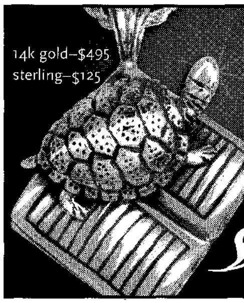

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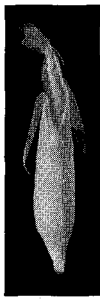

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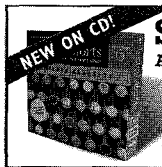

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MUSICAL EVENTS

THE MESSENGER

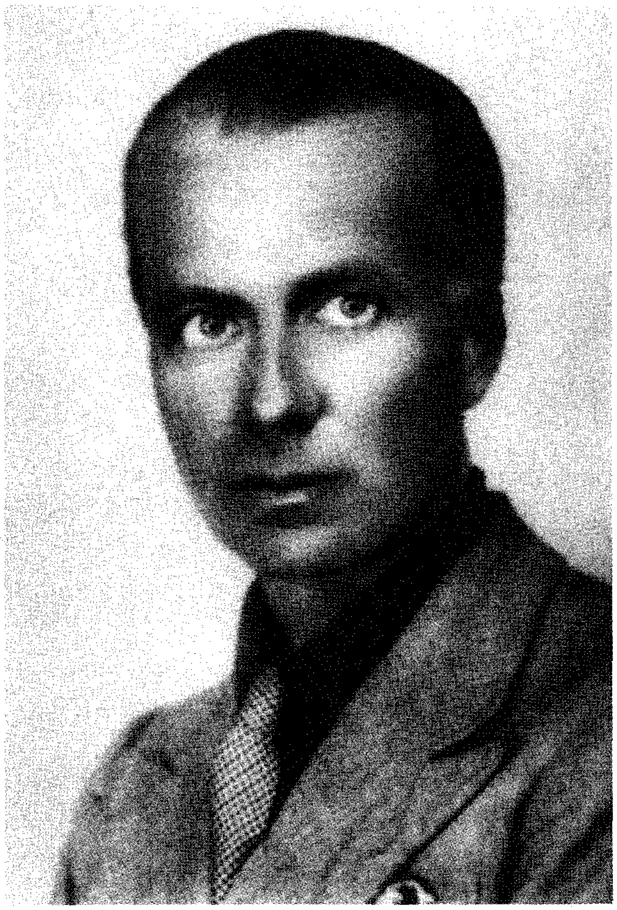
Giacinto Scelsi discovered a world in one note.

BY ALEX ROSS

In the beginning was the Tone. Throughout musical history, composers have commenced major works with a primordial hum, as if to suggest that the universe was audible before it became visible. Monteverdi's "Orfeo," the first masterpiece of opera, begins with an open fifth, notes like twin pillars, over which a high trumpet plays skirling fanfares. Haydn's "Creation" begins with monumental octave Cs, which have the weight of the word of God. Beethoven's Ninth Symphony starts softly, almost imperceptibly, with A and E gleaming in the horns and shimmering in the strings: we tune in to an eternity-in-progress. Wagner's four-day "Ring" cycle is set in motion by a similar cosmogenic drone: an E-flat rumbles deep in the "mystic abyss," as the orchestra pit in Bayreuth is called, and wave upon wave of consonant harmony emanates from it.

As the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, majestic natural visions fell out of fashion. Strauss's "Thus Spake Zarathustra," in imitation of the "Ring," begins with mighty triads over a fundamental, but in the next section a thick harmonic fog descends and the glory is never seen again. In early, radical works by Ravel, Stravinsky, and Schoenberg, repeated tones are alarms of obsession, signals of frenzy. By the time of Alban Berg's "Wozzeck," which was initially sketched during the First World War, the single note had become an instrument of terror: toward the climax of the opera, two enormous Bs are drilled into the listener's brain. In the tragic symphonic narratives of Shostakovich's Fourth and Vaughan Williams's Sixth, monotone patterns seem to represent the world dying with a whimper: entropy in action.

At the end of the nineteen-fifties, Giacinto Scelsi, a self-taught Italian composer and erstwhile playboy count who had dabbled in Eastern religions and Theosophy, had the extraordinary idea of writing an entire work—the "Four Pieces" for chamber orchestra—that consisted of only single tones, one for each movement. Scelsi was not the first to hit on this concept: Elliott Carter had ventured it in his "Eight Études and a Fantasy," in 1950. Nor is the scheme followed literally: the instruments often bend away from the parent note, shifting by microtones, semitones, or larger intervals. But, by the end of the work, a paradigm shift has taken place: the Tone is all-powerful once more. Music returns to its primitive origins, when melody formed from noise. In each of Scelsi's subsequent works, the phenomenon is repeated. Small wonder that this obscure Roman eccentric, who considered himself a "messenger" or "medium," has become a cult figure among younger composers: he makes the eternal new.



In Scelsi's quartets, rich harmonies emerge from nowhere.

Scelsi would have been a hundred this year. Given his mystical propensities, it might be better to say that he *is* a hundred, although he was observed to have died in 1988. To mark the occasion, Miller Theatre, at Columbia University, invited the Flux Quartet to play Scelsi's five string quartets earlier this month. Live performances of this composer's works remain rare; Michael Tilson Thomas, in San Francisco, is the only American conductor who programs them. It is far easier to get to know the music on recordings, by way of the Accord, CPO, Kairos, and Mode labels. Many of the disks are decorated with the Zen-like symbol that the composer made his signature: a circle above a line, like a note floating free of its staff.

Scelsi was born into an old southern-Italian noble family, inheriting the title Count d'Ayala Valva from his mother. He was, of course, the end of the line. At the family castle, he was schooled in "fencing, chess, and Latin," or so he said. He flitted through European aristocratic circles and had his wedding party at Buckingham Palace. But music was his chief obsession. He quickly tilted toward the avant-garde, and when he was very young he attended Luigi Russolo's Futurist noise concerts; his first major work was called "Printing Presses." Later, he became interested in Schoenberg's twelve-tone method, although he did not adopt it. He fell in love with Eastern philosophy and made trips to India and Nepal. After the Second World War, he suffered a breakdown and stopped composing for a few years. He spent day after day playing a single note on the piano. The casual observer might have thought that he had gone mad.

He was, in fact, regaining his balance.

The chanting of Tibetan monks generally consists of deviations around a central tone, with bells and brass creating an ambient halo. Scelsi enacted similar rituals on the piano, then moved to the ondiola, an electronic keyboard whose dials allowed him to vary pitch and tone quality. He wasn't sure how to write it all down, and employed a fellow-composer, Vieri Tosatti, to devise suitable notation. After Scelsi's death, Tosatti published an article entitled "Giacinto Scelsi C'Est Moi," asserting not only that he was the true author of the music but that it was all rubbish. Controversy ensued, and some high-minded European types dismissed Scelsi as a fraud. Robin Freeman, in an essay in the magazine *Tempo*, suggested the opposite: that Scelsi was able to make his imaginative leaps precisely because he was not bound by academic training. It's something for university composition departments to ponder.

Scelsi's methods were strange, but he had a command of narrative which no ghostwriter could have provided. Otherwise, we would be talking about the genius of Tosatti. The music is anything but monotonous; it seethes with change. In the quartets, the players use every trick in the book to transform those long tones, varying the degree of vibrato, bowing over the fingerboard or close to the bridge, adding steel mutes, scraping with maximum pressure. As the tones shift, split apart, and fan out, surprising shapes emerge. In the last part of the Fourth Quartet, a cluster of pitches creeps ever upward, and, in the process, major and minor triads materialize out of nowhere. (The spellbinding "Rain Over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains" sequence, in John Adams's "Doctor Atomic," uses a similar process.) Orchestral works such as the "Four Pieces," "Aion," and "Anahit" build to crypto-Romantic climaxes worthy of Bruckner: horns leap up an octave, winds trill on high, timpani bang out thirds, and the heavens open. In "Konx-Om-Pax," which Mode has recorded, a chorus is added to the mix, chanting an apocalyptic "Om."

Connoisseurs of extreme chamber music may remember that in 1999 the fearless players of the Flux Quartet—Tom Chiu and Conrad Harris, violinists; Max Mandel, violist; and Dave Eggar, cellist—gave the world première of the complete version of Morton Feldman's six-hour-long Second Quartet. Scelsi's quartets, relatively brief in span, don't pose the same challenge of endurance, but they are taxing nevertheless, taking a toll on the bowing arm and on the emotions. Every note counts, each new one more than the last. During the performance at Miller Theatre, I sometimes wished for greater tonal purity, especially in the Fourth Quartet: the chords were hard to hear amid the haze of special effects. But I doubt that any other ensemble could have played with equal ferocity and passion. Scelsi demands imaginative collaborators, and the Flux did nothing by rote.

What most struck me, in my first live encounter with this music, was that the cycle becomes one towering superquartet, in arch form. The First Quartet is the rough foundation: it is couched in a largely atonal idiom, midway between Berg and Bartók. In its final movement, the First suddenly takes off into a world of eerie purity, drawing principally on the "white notes" of the C-major scale. In the Second Quartet, the "one-note" method arrives, to harsh, assaultive effect. But sonorous thirds appear in the last movement, marking Scelsi's reassertion of consonance. The Third brings some rich, glowing major triads, ghosts of the Romantic century. The Fourth Quartet, with its searing chorale, is the zenith. The Fifth Quartet plunges back down to the world of the single note. It is F, the same on which the revolutionary "Four Pieces" began, and it comes and goes in gasping breaths, interspersed with silences.

The Fifth, transcribed in 1984, was Scelsi's last work—at least that we know of. Scientific researchers have recently observed a musical event that employs a curiously familiar style: a black hole in the Perseus cluster of galaxies is emitting a B-flat fifty-seven octaves below middle C. ♦

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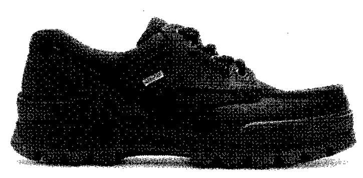

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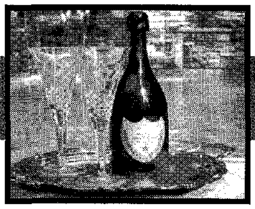

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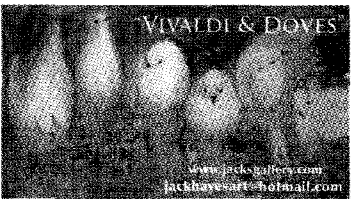

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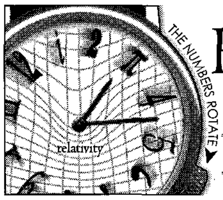

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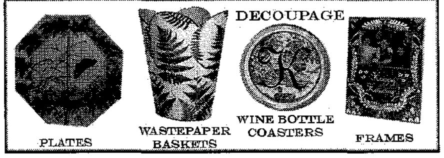

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THE ART WORLD

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Fra Angelico at the Met.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

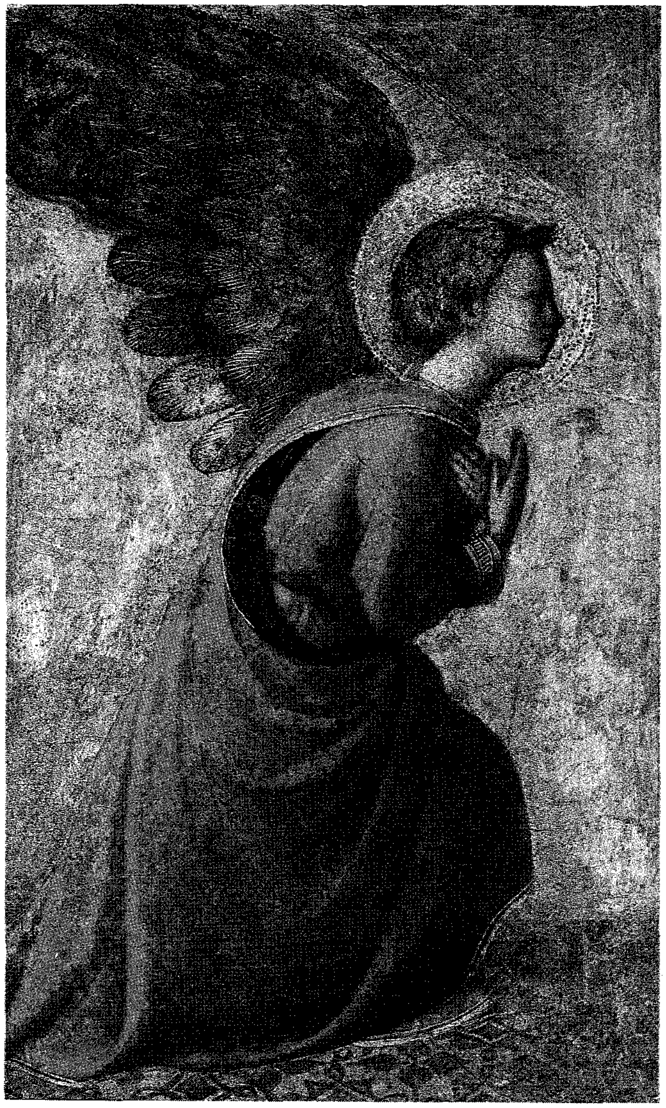
The sweet gravitas of Fra Angelico's paintings may be the all-time best advertising for Christian piety. The early-Renaissance master (circa 1395-1455), seen in a rare retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum (the first in the United States and the second anywhere), breathes spiritual gladness—not ecstasy or bliss, nothing strenuous or unhinged—in a palette given to effulgent pinks, ambrosial blues, and embossed gold, which he uses as a color. His secret is sincerity. Wholly absorbed in his subjects, Angelico seems freshly surprised by the poignance of each conventionally composed Madonna and by the unfathomable sorrow of every Crucifixion. Legend holds that he wept whenever he painted the Passion; the tender, gazing concentration of the pictures—including a highly unusual "Christ Crowned with Thorns," with blood-red eyes—makes this plausible to me. (So much pain, for an undeserved love of humanity.) In predella panels, Angelico retells the adventures of the saints with wondering excitement. They are palpably interesting, remarkably even-tempered people; even having their heads chopped off doesn't rattle them much. And his angels! So nice! Only Angelico, in all of Western art and literature, not excluding Dante and Milton, persuades me that Heaven might be really enjoyable, owing to the liveliness of the company. In the painting "Paradise," saints and angels stroll skyward through a verdant garden and break into pretty turns of courtly dancing. Eternity is going to be fun for them.

Angelico was born Guido di Pietro, near Florence, of unknown parents. He was a freelance artist, probably studying with Lorenzo Monaco, before entering a Dominican convent in his early twenties. By 1423, he was a friar, taking the name Giovanni da Fiesole. His earliest, tentatively attributed works, sampled at the Met, are lovely drawings for illuminated manuscripts. (Since the first Angelico retrospective, in Florence in 1955, new attributions to the artist have come thick and fast, by the standards of art history, incidentally reducing the already doubtful status of the Late Gothic painter Gherardo Starnina, whose putative touchstone "Thebaid," a teeming narrative of a monk's travels to Egypt, now belongs to the young Angelico.) The scant record of Angelico's life does not contradict Vasari's portrait of him in "The Lives of the Artists," written a century after his death, as a devout, obedient servant of his order. To those who wanted work from him, Vasari noted, Angelico "would say with great charm that they should first secure the consent of the prior and then he would not fail them." (For conjoined humility and grandeur, nothing touches Angelico's frescoes in the cells of the Dominican convent of San Marco in Florence: each austere little chamber is graced with a masterwork.) Angelico died in Rome, the most celebrated Italian painter of his generation. Vasari says that he was always called Fra Giovanni Angelico (Angelic Brother John), though the sobriquet was not documented in his lifetime. Since then, it has alternated, especially in Italy, with Beato Angelico, a nomination for sainthood that John Paul II made official in 1984.

How much weight should be given to the notion of Angelico as a holy innocent? Vasari says that the artist renounced wealth and power and lived "withdrawn from the snares of the world," and he recounts that, on one occasion, Angelico declined to eat meat with Pope Nicholas V, because his prior had not granted him permission, "the Pope's authority in this matter not occurring to him." The show's chief curator, Laurence Kanter, and other scholars, writing aridly in the beautiful catalogue, are at pains to discount the tenor of such tales as a sentimental distraction from Angelico's artistic genius. They argue that he was intellectually acute and stylistically progressive, notably in his response to the innovations in perspective and modelling of his meteoric contemporary Masaccio (1401-28). The corrective would be welcome if anyone needed correcting, but who mistakes Angelico for a cloistered Grandma Moses? There is much to be said for the services to mental clarity of just-the-facts scholarship, a discipline with its own equivalents of monkish virtue. I've just never been more struck by the effective heartlessness of an art history that dismisses all values except those which answer to empirical study. Viewers seeking emotional meaning must confirm for themselves that Angelico's definitive charm is as a storyteller.

Consider the account of the magician Hermogenes. According to the catalogue's brief exegesis of a little panel painting, just ten inches high, this obscure character "summoned devils to ensnare Saint James, but the apostle turned them on Hermogenes instead. The devils bound Hermogenes, but James ordered him freed as an act of Christian charity, and offered him his own staff as an amulet against the demons." The picture shows the sumptuously robed, unhappy sorcerer being untied at the saint's direction. A gang of satisfyingly dark, furious, fire-spewing devils riot behind him. The complex composition—five human figures, a colonnaded palace, a house, trees, and mountains—is improbably airy. That and the rounded mass of the figures and the deft spatial recession of the architecture are extremely sophisticated for their time. But style, in Angelico, never trumps story. James's extended staff disappears behind the man who is freeing the magician: the occlusion hints at a jump in time—the offer of the staff is a future action, which waits on the untying. Such medievalish devices for packing sequential events into single frames are far from incidental to Angelico's significance. They are even, perhaps, the timeliest features of his work today, when possibilities of narrative and illustration preoccupy more and more artists in mediums from painting to comics to performance.

Be warned that, at the Met, getting in the swing of Angelico's art takes some effort. The frescoes and the major altarpieces that are his greatest work are necessarily absent, and many of his sixty-eight temperas on wood in the show are variously abraded, battered, overpainted, or badly restored fragments of plundered ensembles. It can be hard at first to distinguish their motifs from the standard fare of the early fifteenth century. The supplementary works in the show are of no help in this regard, emphasizing later—and distinctly lesser—artists whom Angelico influenced. But these impediments have the consequence of proving Angelico's intimate glories, which blossom given prolonged attention to the details of execution. If I could take home one work from the show, it might be a small panel, "The Annunciatory Angel," that is part of an Annunciation scene. The androgynous angel, in pink robes with a slash of blue, leans forward as if into a gust of wind, one hand on his chest and the other beginning to advance in a gesture of offering. The face is intent but serene. A swiftly brushed wing, of brown feathers, merges with the gilt background, above a swath of patterned floor in convincing perspective. The delicately roughened surface texture gives sensuous immediacy—suddenness, even—to a figure that feels less lit and shaded than made of materialized light and shade.



"The Annunciatory Angel": Angelico's secret is sincerity.

COURTESY ALTE PINAKOTHEK, MUNICH

Angelico brought celestial essences down to earth, gently. His style harmonizes elements both archaic and innovative. His Madonnas and Crucifixions retain the hieratic structure of the Gothic, but with a diminished sense of upward thrust. At the same time, he soft-pedals the realistic weightiness of bodies, which Masaccio developed and Piero della Francesca would perfect. It's as if rising and descending forces acted simultaneously in Angelico, with gravity given a slight edge. The effect of tensed, subtle buoyancy is rhetorical. It pronounces Angelico's idea of religious grace. Just think of Heaven, he implies, and its soaring immateriality will suffuse the here and now, making a miracle of physical existence. Notice how often the hands of Angelico's subjects gesture horizontally, parallel to the ground. Somehow, side-by-sideness is a felt condition, even of his single figures. Visually advancing color counterbalances illusions of deep space. Angelico's ruling quality is equipoise—of back and forth, right and left, down and up, this world and the next, medieval halos and Renaissance flesh. His appearance in New York is no mere visit but a visitation. ♦

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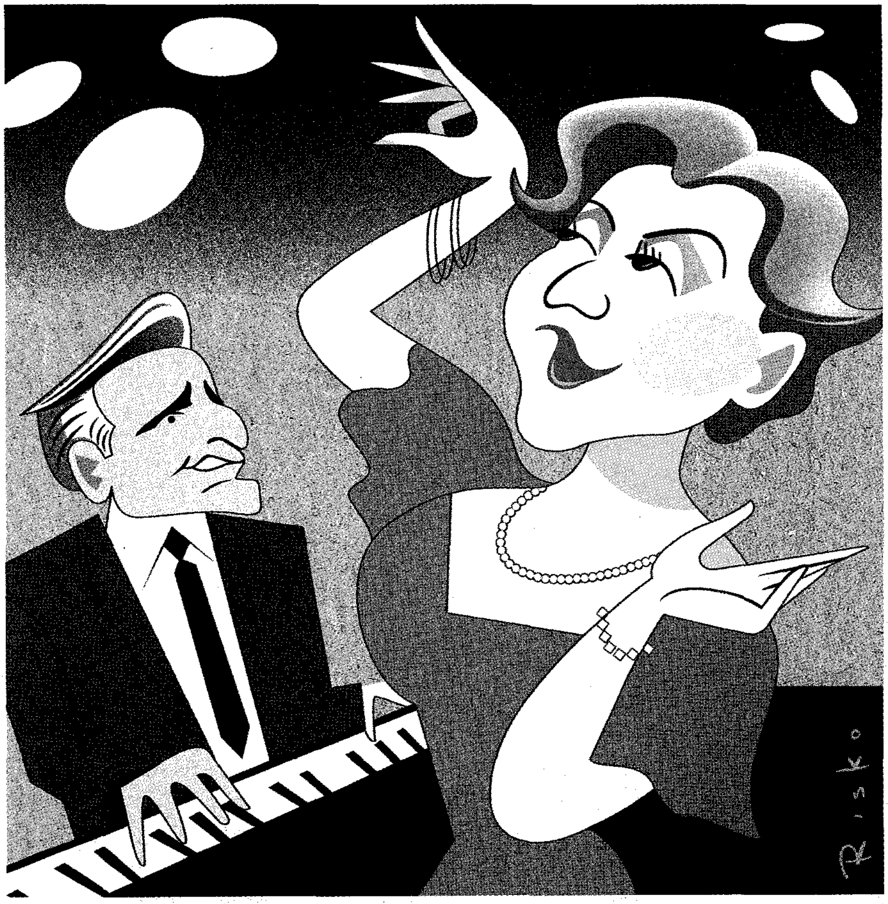
THE THEATRE

DIVA IN DISTRESS

A camp legend reborn.

BY HILTON ALS



Donald Corren and Judy Kaye as a duo of wannabes in "Souvenir."

It is difficult to prove—or disprove—the brilliance of those stage performers whose rise to fame occurred during the now distant pre-DVD age. While historians, by scouring reviews and photographs, can approximate what made a given performance memorable, a diva of the theatre, that most ephemeral of art forms, relies, for the most part, on fans to keep her mystique alive. It is unlikely that there are many theatregoers around who remember just what it was that made the late Jeanne Eagels such a powerful Sadie in the 1922 Somerset Maugham adaptation "Rain," but there she is, still being talked about, analyzed, and debated—as are her successors Kim Stanley, Diana Sands, and Elizabeth Hartman. For if myth has a home in any branch of our contemporary culture, it's in the theatre. Unlike the stars of the screen, the more elusive a theatre goddess is the more she is loved by her audience; distance is built into this particular form of worship.

In recent years, the writer Wayne Koestenbaum and Gary Lee Boas, whose photographs and reminiscences make up the original and extraordinary 2000 book "Starstruck," have both examined the unique, perplexing, and fascinating character of the theatre fan. But James McCourt's 1971 baroque novel "Mawrdew Czgowchwz" remains the most insightful text we have on diva worship; it should be required reading for anyone going to see Stephen Temperley's troubling new play "Souvenir" (at the Lyceum). In this two-person show—a kind of "Master

ROBERT RISKO

Class," starring two people who never quite made it—Temperley alludes to what McCourt makes explicit: the transference that occurs between a female star and her largely gay audience when both are in the process of inventing themselves in public.

Set, as such pieces should be, in memory, "Souvenir" opens in a supper club in Manhattan. The year is 1964. Cosme McMoon (Donald Corren) is playing the piano. Cosme is a gay former songwriter whose own work never had the lilt or the sophistication of the standards he is singing now. In a pleasant baritone, he croons "One for My Baby," a song that carries us to another time and place; and, sure enough, as he tickles the ivories and tells the audience about his life and his professional failures, the supper club around him is transformed into a suite at the Ritz-Carlton inhabited by a wealthy middle-aged society woman, Florence Foster Jenkins (Judy Kaye). (The excellent stage design is by R. Michael Miller.) We have travelled back thirty more years, and Cosme is a young man, hungry for a job. He's been recommended as an accompanist to Florence, who aspires to be an opera singer. The problem is she can't sing—a fact that's lost on Florence herself. She reveres "Mr. Mozart" and "Mr. Gounod," and she longs to serve them with her warbly, out-of-tune soprano. Cosme quickly realizes, though, that Florence is possessed of a kind of genius, or, more precisely, of a force that he can't resist—or duck. Nor can he quite fathom why Florence can't hear herself. "What was going on in her head?" he asks. "Was I in the presence of mere delusion or a kind of . . . dementia?" (For the audience, the question reflects back to Cosme: How can he persevere with songwriting when he clearly has no talent?)

Kaye's portrayal of the life and career of the famously bad singer who became a camp legend in New York before the Second World War is so real and so heartbreaking that one hardly notices the cheap shots that the director, Vivian Matalon, levels at his heroine. When Florence opens her mouth to sing, Matalon has Cosme repeatedly roll his eyes at the audience. (There is no winking or grimacing, however, when Florence, out of what she thinks is mutual respect, tries to sing one of Cosme's songs.) Dressed, for the most part, in variations on blue or red, Kaye has the erect posture and regal trill of a bird who turns every environment into a gilded cage she's happy to sing in. But only in New York, where making a spectacle of oneself is encouraged, could Florence find an audience. Temperley doesn't spend much time explaining how she became the rage, albeit a brief one. Instead, he concentrates on her obliviousness of her own camp appeal. Kaye infuses every off-key note and stiff gesture of her excruciating arias with deep feeling. In an exceptional bit of business, Temperley has Florence listen to a recording of one of her performances. But Florence firmly refuses to believe that the record is a true representation of her talent—you can tell by the way she drags the needle over the disk searching for a particular phrase. "My one reservation is that there is a place—you know, where . . . I think *something* goes awry," she tells Cosme. "The piano is not *quite* with the voice. . . . You must *not* blame yourself. Not for one moment."

When Florence makes her début at Carnegie Hall, in 1944, however, reality is unavoidable. Between snippets of her stilted performance, Cosme describes, delightedly, how Tallulah Bankhead had to be carried from the theatre in hysterics. We hear an audience laughing on a tape loop. The audience at the Lyceum also laughs. Kaye makes palpable the pain that this rejection causes Florence. That pain becomes ours to bear, if we can—and, given Kaye's performance, we almost can't. It's a moment that Matalon could have lovingly exploited; instead, he pulls back. As we strain to see the woman inside Temperley's portrait, Matalon, more often than not, gives us a caricature.

Corren, too, seems to want "Souvenir" to be light entertainment. When Cosme looks out at the audience during Florence's rare moments of self-doubt, it's as if he were asking for our collusion in thinking her a fool. But Kaye, a wise performer, knows that pathos is essential for the play to work. She manages to find the beats and pauses and wonder beneath the Burns and Allen. At the end of the show, she sings "Ave Maria" as Florence thought she sang it: richly, con brio—and without even a touch of sadness. In that moment, Kaye shows us the gorgeous folly that goes into making a work of art. She offers us a portrait of triumph, disillusion, and belief—the three driving forces that any artist needs in order to be heard. ♦

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

RINGS OF FIRE

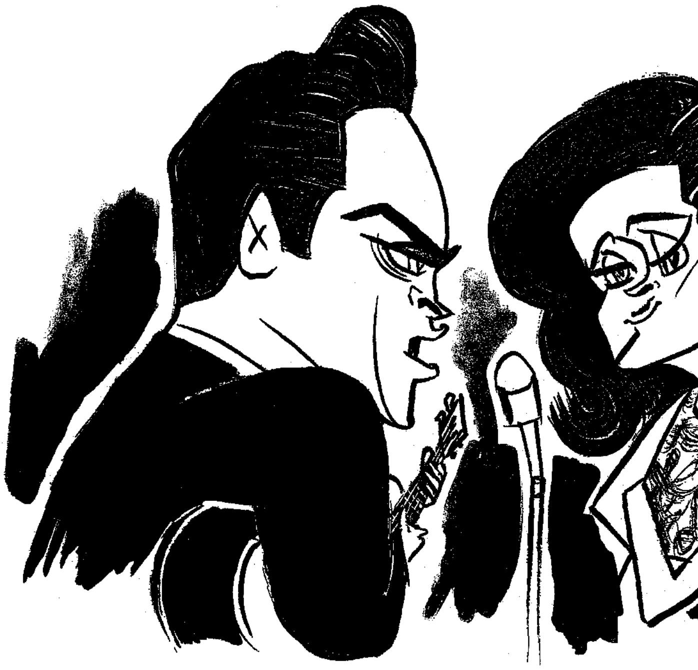
"Walk the Line" and "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price."

BY DAVID DENBY

He was homely as a young man, gloomy-looking, even a little forlorn, with a thin mouth and ears that stuck out, and he didn't know quite what to do with himself. As all the world is aware, however, no one ever aged better than Johnny Cash: if it's a cliché to say that he looked like a broken plow, he had the scars and the deep furrows to make the cliché ring true. For all his talk of prison, he never did do hard time, but hard times he knew well enough. When people looked at Johnny Cash, they saw Experience and Authenticity and Power, and perhaps only the literal-minded wanted to know where life ended and show business began. Joaquin Phoenix, who plays Cash in the bio-pic "Walk the Line," is a remarkable-looking actor, with deep-set blue eyes, a long chin, and a scarred upper lip that serves as a nice equivalent to Cash's crags and creases. At the age of thirty-one, Phoenix has developed a malignant beauty reminiscent of Jack Palance's glowering splendor in his Prince of Darkness phase. As I watched Phoenix sling his guitar around and gun it at the audience in Cash's shambling style, I couldn't imagine anyone better suited to play the role. But this movie is a lot less interesting than it might be. Though it's not bad—in fact, it's rather sweet—it's too simple a portrait of a very complicated and calculating entertainer.

The film's writer-director, James Mangold, working with the screenwriter Gill Dennis, is skillful but safe-playing. The early days of young J.R., as everyone calls him, are handled gently, but without much imaginative drive. In rounded earth tones, Mangold and the cinematographer, Phedon Papamichael, set up the physical and moral hardships of Cash's life in rural Arkansas during and after the Second World War: Cash as a boy picking cotton in the hot sun; his virtuous older brother dying in an accident as he's trying to earn money for the family, and his enraged, dead-eyed father (Robert Patrick), somehow holding J.R. responsible. As a young man, J.R. is a diffident door-to-door salesman who plays the guitar warily, almost on the sly; he marries a loving but conventional woman (Vivian Liberto) who wants him home with her and the kids, and has little interest in his talent. When he impresses Sam Phillips, of Sun Records, in 1955, he escapes into what the movie represents as mild vagabondage on the road, in the company of Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, and a doe-eyed, swivelling boy named Elvis, who, someone says, "is only interested in poon." The actors do all their own singing, and, in Phoenix's case, the pitch isn't always steady, but the slightly shabby amateurism of their Southern and Canadian tours feels right. Country, R. & B., and rock in its nascent phase were all sloshing around together in 1956, and the participants didn't necessarily know that history had seized them by the shoulders.

Through all this, Cash boozes and scarfs down pills; he suffers from a sense of unworthiness, brought on, perhaps, by his brother's death. Who knows? His temperament is only vaguely suggested. The actual Johnny Cash combined the sinner and the Christian in one body; people loved him, and identified with him, because he conveyed how hard it was to be a good man. But the movie offers a tame version of that struggle. At times, Phoenix looks as if he wanted to kill somebody, but Mangold hasn't written anything interesting for him to say, and most of the time Cash comes off as furtive, weak, and lost. When he meets June Carter (Reese Witherspoon), of the Carter Family, he can no longer hide. Witherspoon, shaking long black tresses, makes Carter quick and funny, highly sexual and highly principled. She stares directly at Cash's wavering character, and she nails him every time. "Walk the Line" becomes a kind of bantering romantic morality play, in which he struggles to be worthy of her love, and she struggles against her desire to have him. The outcome is never in doubt, of course—he gives in to responsibility and she to sex—and this pleasant movie ends with a celebration of their thirty-five-year-long union as it gets under way. But that union is less a ring of fire than a ring of virtue. Can the



Joaquin Phoenix as Johnny Cash, and Reese Witherspoon as June Carter.

TOM BACHTELL

central lesson of Johnny Cash's life really be that he was a loser until a good woman shamed him into growing up?

In the matter of the Wal-Mart company, of Bentonville, Arkansas, these facts may be stipulated: It employs roughly a million two hundred thousand men and women in the United States. The average wage for full-time, hourly Wal-Mart employees is nine dollars and seventy cents an hour; the average annual income for such workers is about seventeen thousand dollars. Half of Wal-Mart's employees cannot afford the company's health-care plan for their children, so many apply for public assistance from state and federal Medicaid programs. Wal-Mart saves individual consumers hundreds of dollars every year, but, when the company builds one of its gargantuan facilities at the edge of a small city or town, and then sells goods at reduced prices, the normal effect of shopping malls on retail businesses is doubled: long-standing stores get boarded up; wages and, often, property values decline; streets turn derelict and empty.

So reads the docket. The people's court will now convene. Most of this information, and a great deal more, can be found in Robert Greenwald's accusatory new documentary, "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price." I harp on what is well established because Wal-Mart has, according to the *Times*, established a "war room" staffed by, among others, former officials of both the Kerry and the Bush election teams, in order to refute the alleged canards of its many critics. But, before Wal-Mart begins shooting off its pop guns, let me say that Greenwald's film could not possibly be confused with a work of documentary art. Greenwald—the director of the 2004 "Outfoxed," an exposé of Fox News—has made the cinematic equivalent of a smudged pamphlet distributed on the street. The director throws factual material onto the screen in a hyped-up, bullying rush. The sequence of events is often confusing. Fake newspaper-style headlines with exclamation points, in the manner of a Warner Bros. gangster movie from 1934, suddenly appear and disappear. In the midst of excerpted TV news reports about Wal-Mart, a voice is heard on the soundtrack which sounds like a newscaster speaking but is actually a voice-over concocted by the filmmakers. The effect, in general, is to surround the viewer with tightly edited outrages that often slur the distinction between fact and assertion. Nor does Greenwald take any interesting risks as a filmmaker. He offers nothing equivalent to, say, Michael Moore's habit of placing his bulk, in attitudes of mock courtesy, in the path of public or corporate officials. But he does interview ex-employees, and their sore and unhappy testimony is the heart and soul of the movie. Former store managers speak with evident shame of stiffing workers out of overtime pay, busting up attempts to unionize, pushing poor families onto public assistance. Some of these people may have been stymied at the company, but I wouldn't discount their testimony for that reason. Current employees are interviewed, too, some of them in dark shadow, and they all speak of intimidation as a way of life.

Greenwald's shrewdest move was to unfurl the flag. He plays "God Bless America" and "This Land Is Your Land" on the soundtrack while making the case that Wal-Mart undermines basic American values. In an extended sequence, a family in Missouri that has, through three generations, nurtured and expanded an IGA store is put out of business within months of Wal-Mart's arrival on the outskirts of town. These are conservative people, patriots, and believers in free enterprise. Stunned and almost choking, they are aware that to complain about the workings of capitalism could sound like self-pity; they can do little but say, over and over, that Wal-Mart's triumph—it even receives subsidies from their community—is "unfair." Along with the employees, these are the company's victims.

The last section of the movie, which reminds me of pulse-raising, bluntly obvious films that I saw at student rallies in the sixties, is devoted to the fervent anti-Wal-Mart movement—groups that have organized to file suit or to keep the company out. Greenwald presents these folks—employees, ministers, lawyers, lefties, and wealthy homeowners, too—as an unstoppable wave of resistance. "Wal-Mart: The High Cost of Low Price" is an organizing tool, a film for use. Greenwald plans to show it to church groups and at community meetings and to sell it as an inexpensive video. Much of it goes by in a blur, but I won't easily forget a young woman with two kids, living below the poverty line, who says in passing that she works at Wal-Mart, cashes her check, and then shops at Wal-Mart. She may have other choices, but she has stopped making them. For all its missteps, the movie powerfully suggests that Wal-Mart is capable of demoralizing a community so thoroughly that it doesn't have the spirit to carry on its life outside the big box. ◆

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Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Frank Cotham, must be received by Sunday, November 20th. Finalists in the November 7th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the December 5th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

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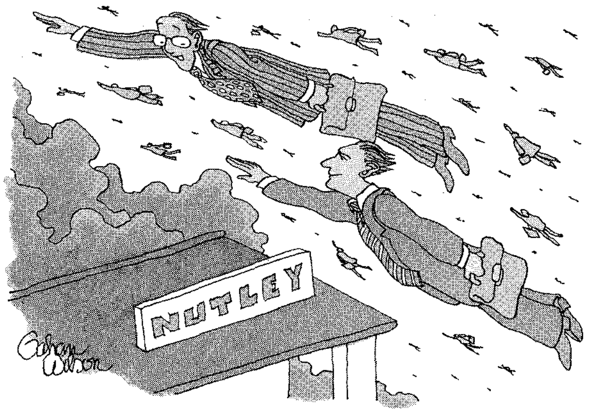
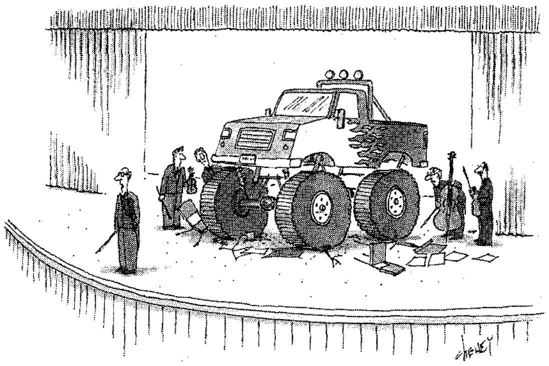


"Hold my hand and we can use the car-pool lane."
Eric J. Adams, Penngrove, Calif.



THE FINALISTS

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Fred Barrie, Valparaiso, Ind.

"That concludes tonight's performance of 'Pimp My Ride of the Valkyries.' "
Nancy Doig, Oakland, Calif.

"Sorry I'm late."
Melanie Huston, Washington, D.C.

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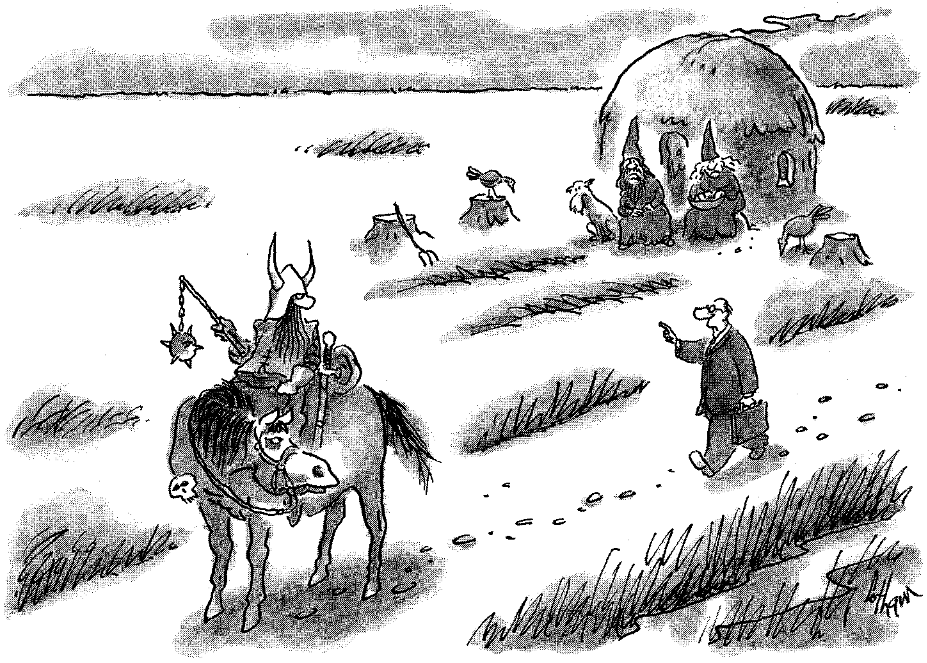

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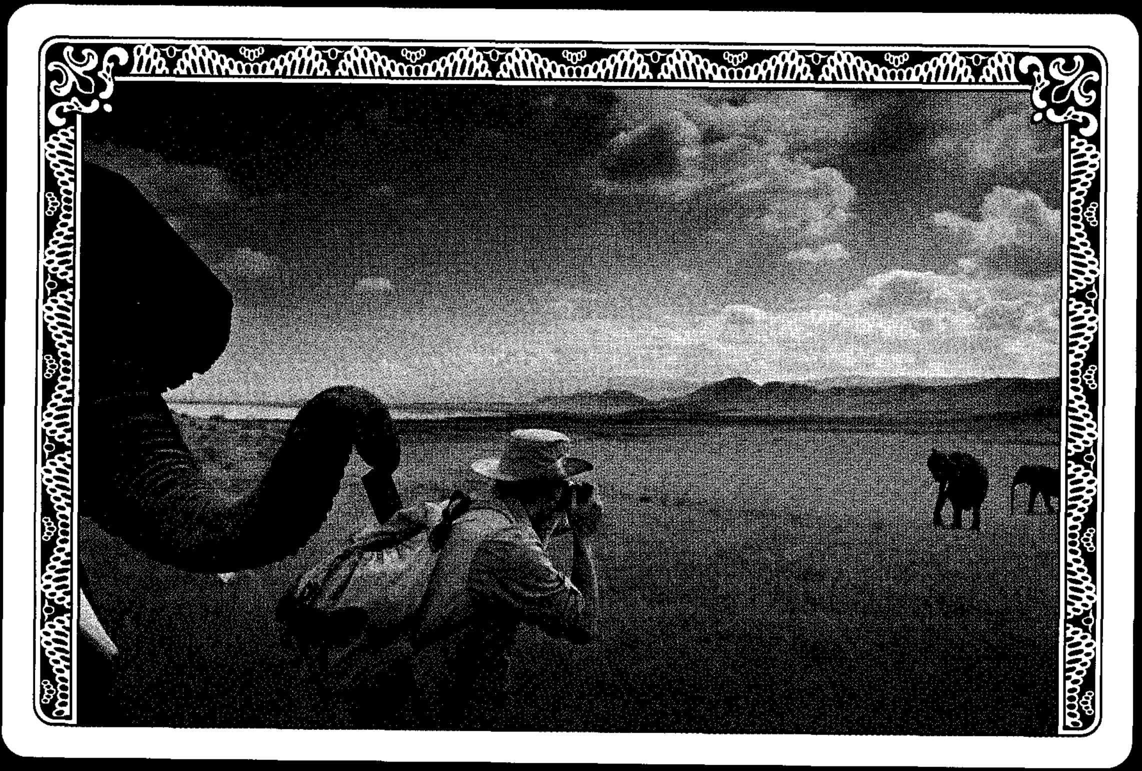

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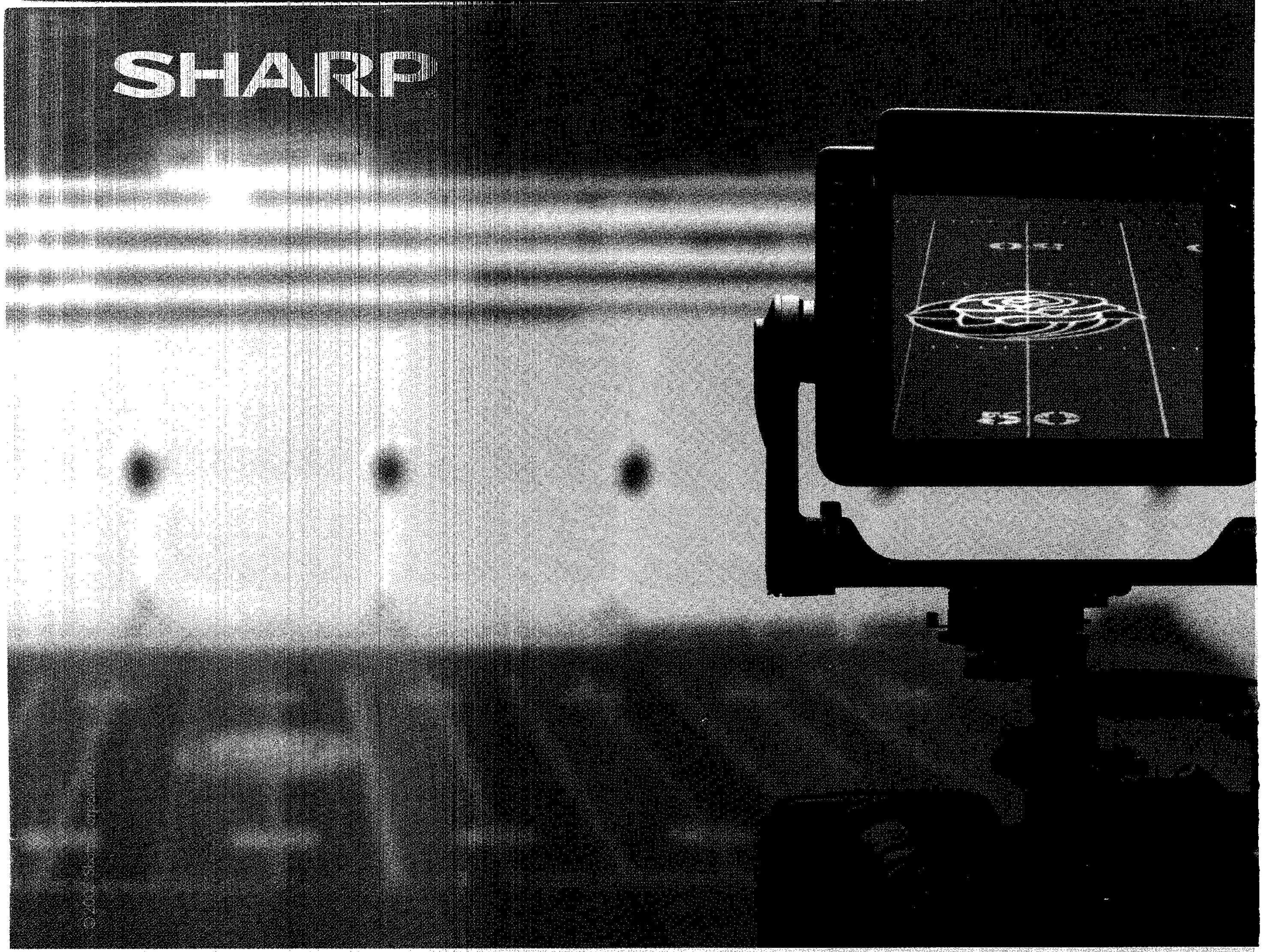

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